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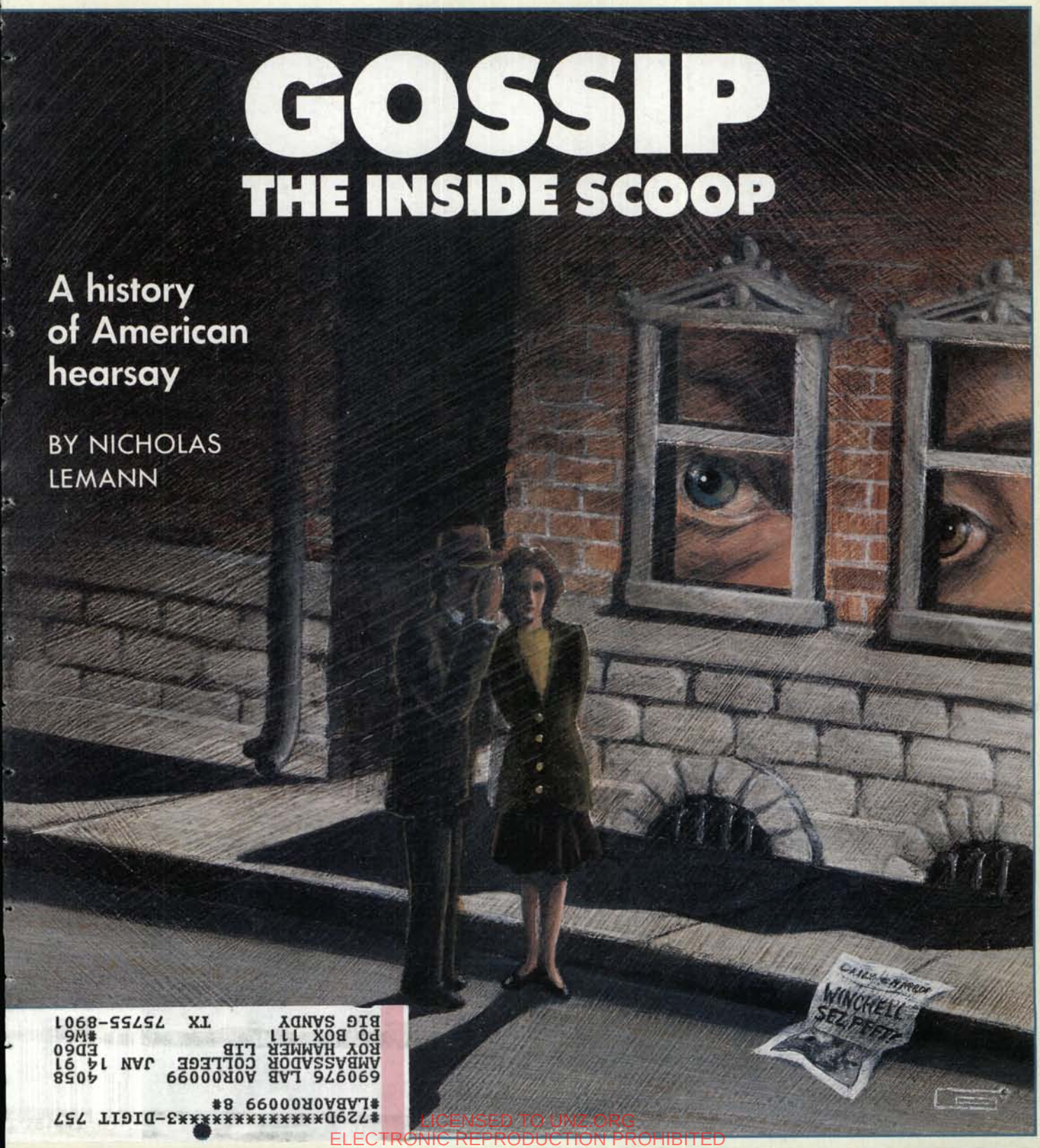

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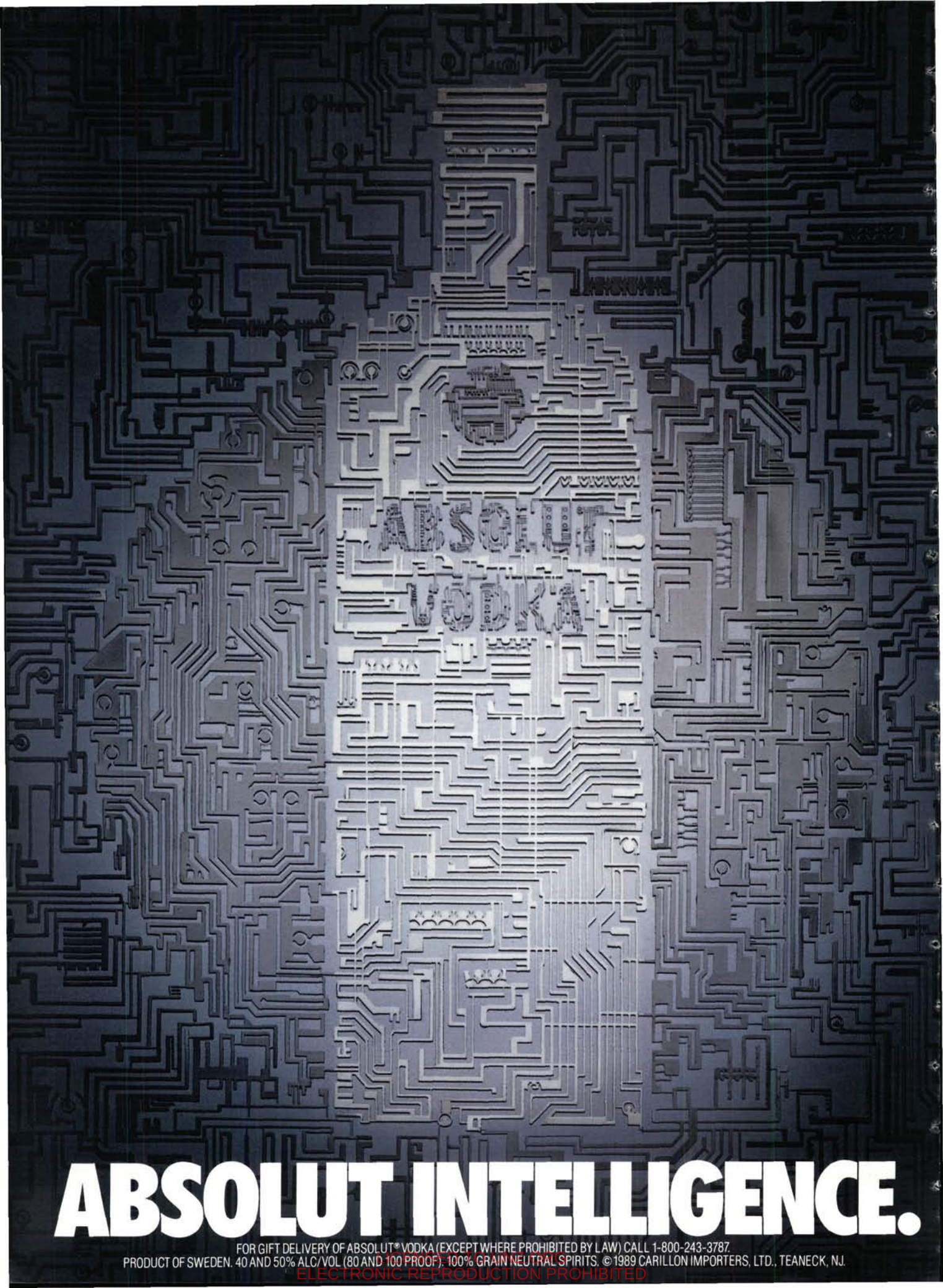

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NOVEMBER 5, 1990

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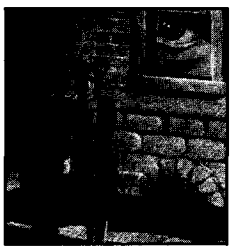

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FROM WASHINGTON

Ministerial responsibility

"No one is calling for Baker's resignation. . . ." —*Time*, October 8

On April 1, 1982, after dropping any number of threats that were ignored, the military government of Argentina invaded and occupied the British-ruled Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. "While nobody can be sure of the circumstances in which Argentina might have desisted from invading the islands . . . ," writes Margaret Thatcher's biographer Hugo Young, "what is incontestable is that British policy offered no deterrent to her doing so."

Four days later Thatcher's foreign minister, Lord Carrington, resigned along with two deputies. Why? "I have been responsible for the policy. I think it is right that I resign" (although "[i]n my view much of the criticism is unfounded"). At that point, no one knew how the Falklands crisis would turn out. But even though it ended as a triumph for Britain, spurred Thatcher to her first re-election, and brought down the Argentine junta, few in Britain dispute that its start was a policy disaster and Carrington's resignation was the appropriate response.

Two hundred twenty-five Britons and more than 650 Argentineans died in the Falklands War. America and the world would be mightily relieved if the crisis over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait could be resolved favorably at such a relatively modest cost. Why shouldn't the American officials responsible for the policy disaster that led to this crisis resign or be relieved of their posts?

To be sure, there are differences. The Falkland Islands were British sovereign territory. But if we are going to fight for Kuwait's sovereignty as if it were our own—and that is President Bush's commitment—we surely should have made that clear to Saddam Hussein before he invaded. America's policies toward Iraq before and after August 2 can be defended independently. They just can't be defended together. The implication of each is that the other was or is disastrously wrong.

Assuming (for the sake of argument) that the current policy is right, the previous policy was a double failure: first, in misinterpreting Hussein's intentions; second, in failing to make clear our own intentions. The misinterpretation of Hussein was also twofold. Not only did the U.S. overlook several specific signs that Iraq was going to invade Kuwait. It also utterly misjudged Hussein's general intentions as a national leader.

Subsequent facile comparisons to Hitler notwithstanding, until the moment of the invasion the Bush administration saw Hussein as a potential moderate and ally in the Mideast. It overlooked his nuclear program, his chemical weapons, his mass murder of his own people, his coddling of terrorists. It fought against congressional efforts to limit American subsidies. All this was in service of a foolish realpolitik, a softheaded hardheadedness, a failed attempt to play geo-chess like Henry Kissinger. As Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie put it in *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf* (Times Books), American policy toward Iraq has been "a curious blend of cynicism and naïveté."

Hindsight has its limits. There was no knowing in advance that the invasion definitely would happen. But there surely was reason to conclude that it might. Thus the second failure: not attempting to dissuade Hussein by warning him of the consequences.

U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie's notorious transcribed audience with Hussein on July 25, a week before the invasion, has been widely misinterpreted. It's even worse than you think. Having heard Hussein's threat to invade, Glaspie explicitly sympathized with his complaint that Kuwait was driving down oil prices, said that "many Americans" shared his wish for higher prices, and went on: "I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your border disagreement with Kuwait." In other words, the famous "no opinion" remark was merely a qualification of her general endorsement of Iraqi war aims. There was nothing remotely this scandalous in the Falklands case.

The truth is that the Bush administration could not have given Hussein a serious warning about the consequences of invading Kuwait, because the administration itself didn't know how strongly it would react. Bush's first instinct was caution, but within days we were off to war. With no underlying values to guide your policy, you lose the practical advantages of consistency and predictability. You also risk going too far on the momentum of shallow enthusiasm—something Bush's serial Iraq policies may have done in both directions.

The pre-August 2 Bush policy is already a proven disaster, and blame for it ranges from the president himself to April in Baghdad. So who should resign? The tradition of ministerial responsibility—which doesn't really exist in the United States, but ought to—suggests Secretary of State James Baker. In Carrington's words, Baker was "responsible for the policy." A dignified Baker resignation would accomplish three things. First, it would establish that there is accountability *somewhere* for monumental failures of government. Second, it would protect the honor of the State Department and end the ugly scapegoating of subordinates. Third, it would protect President Bush, just as Carrington's resignation shielded Thatcher.

But that isn't Jim Baker's style. Far from shouldering responsibility, he has distanced himself by saying that any instructions Glaspie may have received before meeting Hussein were among "probably 312,000 cables or so that go out under my name." He has scorned any criticism of his own policy as hindsight. Young observes in his Thatcher book: "Although hindsight is often the last refuge of the instant historian, scorning hindsight is always the first resort of the evasive politician." Like the Falklands surprise, the Kuwait surprise is "the kind of failure in the machinery of government which deserves to be judged according to its outcome."

Baker also has mounted a damage-control campaign, contemptible and hilarious at the same time, through his favorite medium of self-aggrandizing leaks to the press. Some highlights:

- A *Newsweek* cover story, September 17, revealing the "inside story of secret diplomacy between the superpowers" over Kuwait. It begins: "Secretary of State James Baker brought troubling news." It was August 1 and Baker was in the Soviet Union, telling Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that Iraq was about to invade—the beginning of a historic triumph of superpower cooperation. *Newsweek* does not ask why, if Baker knew August 1 that the invasion was coming, he didn't do something to try to stop it.
- A front-page *Wall Street Journal* article, October 1. This reports that as long ago as last April, Baker and two top aides decided at a secret meeting that "Saddam Hussein should be put on notice . . . that his menacing behavior would not be tolerated." Baker approved tough sanctions, but—tragically—"the federal bureaucracy and members of Congress preoccupied with defending special in-

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CORRESPONDENCE

Running on empty

To the editors:

James K. Glassman's proposal in "The Great Banks Robbery" (October 8) to eliminate deposit insurance is a recipe for disaster. The government is the only party with deep enough pockets to ensure banking stability. The real fault with deposit insurance is that the government did not increase the insurance premiums for institutions making risky loans. An institution that lent to thrifty Grandma Jones paid essentially the same premiums as did Vernon S&L. Just as insurance companies can refuse to insure high-risk individuals, the government should refuse to insure high-risk institutions. Glassman's proposal calls for almost the exact opposite.

The government needs to provide insurance for banks in order to maintain a sound financial system. However, the government should act more like an insurance company than a rich uncle.

KENNETH B. HALLMAN
Arlington Heights, Illinois

To the editors:

James K. Glassman's comments about the unlikelihood of runs on uninsured banks are questionable. Although it is true that there has been no run on a money market fund, the history of these funds is too short to provide data about the chance of a run during a financial crisis. In any event, the funds are obviously much better positioned to meet sudden demands for cash than even the soundest banks: fund assets have very short maturities, whereas bank loan portfolios, no matter how sound, are generally much longer term and hence less liquid.

Glassman suggests that in the case of a run the Fed can provide the funds needed on an emergency basis. This works if the problem is caused by insufficient liquidity of an otherwise sound institution. But if the Fed is going to lend freely to insolvent or nearly insolvent institutions, so they can pay off depositors before going out of business, then we're back where we started, without even the consolation of having collected a few deposit insurance premiums.

BERNARD D. YOMTOV
Nashville, Tennessee

Uneducated mirth

To the editors:

Luc Sante writes that at the performance he attended in Cambridge, Karen Finley "establishe[d] an easy rapport with the audience" ("Blood and Chocolate," October 15). Not at the show I saw in New York. There Finley's rapport was as "easy" as that of a police detective administering the third degree. She did indeed jounce amusingly about the stage after pouring gelatin into her bra cups; but once she had coaxed us into giggles she abruptly halted the act to reprimand us primly for "laughing at a woman." Only sexists, it seems, laugh at women who invite mirth.

And only the politically uneducated laugh out of turn, or so we learned at a later point when one of Finley's lines drew titters. This time she interrupted her monologue—so much for being "seized by the emotions" of her characters—to announce that what we had just heard "wasn't funny," so she had better repeat it. Which she did, for an audience now bullied into silence. Thus it went, one crude manipulation after another, each less suggestive of a latter-day Dadaist or Futurist who "articulates what many people think" than of a jackbooted sloganeer curiously akin to the agents of repression she piously denounces.

SAM TANENHAUS
Katonah, New York

Put up your Duke

To the editors:

It's hard to see how *National Review* is in the "forefront of Duke's rehabilitation," as Sidney Blumenthal writes in "Duke's Duds" (October 15), when in the same September 3 editorial Blumenthal so selectively culled for his quotes we said that Duke is "at best an opportunist, at worst, a not-so-ex fanatic." We did note he is running on a perfectly legitimate program of skepticism about affirmative action and Great Society-style welfare, which we called "cynical." But, we added, "If the Republicans leave the Devil all the best tunes, he will convert a good many of the congregation."

Blumenthal can read. He knew what our editorial said. He knew what lines he was omitting. He was deliberately dishonest in misrepresenting our editorial position and, as a result, in misleading your readers.

WICK ALLISON
New York, New York

The writer is the publisher of *National Review*.

Sidney Blumenthal replies:

"Deliberately dishonest"? Strong words—perhaps I'm expected to challenge Wick Allison to a duel. Instead I'll simply note that "culling" is by definition selective. For example, here is the sentence from which Allison has culled the word "cynical": "Republicans seem to believe that tough thinking about the debacle of America's social and racial policies ought to be relegated to TV spots in leap years, between which they are free to pursue their 'real,' i.e., semi-liberal, inclinations—an approach to politics and policy that is at least as cynical as Duke's." I do not think I misrepresented *National Review*'s editorial, the burden of which was exactly as Allison's letter puts it: to portray David Duke's "program" as "perfectly legitimate."

Artifacts

To the editors:

In response to your bizarre "Jacob the Unwise" (Notebook, October 1), it suffices to state that the language in my resolution to which you take exception is verbatim in all guidelines of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which will not fund any project that "advocates or promotes a particular ideological, religious, or partisan point of view. . . ." NEH grantees work productively without propagandizing the public at taxpayer expense.

I voted for NEA Chairman John Frohnmayer's August resolution to reaffirm the agency's commitment "to bring quality art to the American people." I did oppose the Lichtenstein-Goodman resolution advising the chairman to withdraw the current language that pledges grantees not to use NEA funds for obscenity; the chairman has wisely rejected that advice. "The artists themselves" are not the problem, only the small, highly partisan sect within the art world that wants federal funds for political and sexual propaganda.

JACOB NEUSNER
St. Petersburg, Florida

The writer is a former member of the National Council on the Arts.

Naval defense

To the editors:

Edward N. Luttwak's otherwise insightful essay ("Kuwaiting Game," September 3) was marred by his flippant and misinformed criticism of America's military role in the current crisis.

One of a handful of unsupported non sequiturs that Luttwak serves up to your readers is this one: "The U.S. Navy is now sheltering in the Persian Gulf as many ships as it can, not to battle virtually navy-less Iraq, but to best protect them from the budget gale

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 5, 1990

BEATING THE SYSTEM

The federal budget crisis continues as we write, and so does the brisk exchange of recriminations. It's the White House's fault. It's Congress's fault. It's the fault of the Republican conservatives for sabotaging the deal their leaders made. It's the fault of the Democratic liberals for sabotaging the deal *their* leaders made. It's the fault of Ronald Reagan, whose 1981 supply-side hoax created a gigantic and intractable deficit, and of his Democratic collaborators on Capitol Hill. It's the fault of craven politicians who think only of the next election. It's the fault of the greedy Medicare generation, the greedy corporate lobbyists, the greedy special interests, and above all the greedy American people, who want everything government money can buy but don't want to tax themselves to pay for it.

All of these explanations explain something, but they do not explain enough. For the budget crisis is part of a larger, and chronic, crisis of governance in this country. When it comes to carrying out a complex, comprehensive, and coherent program, the American political-governmental system simply does not work very well.

In the 1960s and 1970s the weakness of our system of separation of powers, with all its oft-realized potential for governmental gridlock, was examined at length by political scientists as different as Samuel Huntington (who called ours a "Tudor polity"), James MacGregor Burns, and Walter Dean Burnham. But for most of the past decade such diagnoses have been out of fashion. After the failed administrations of Nixon, Ford, and Carter, it was generally agreed that America had found, in Ronald Reagan, a president who could get things done. In some ways, particularly in the realm of security policy, that assessment was just. But Mr. Reagan's great domestic success, the supply-side tax cut, was not all that impressive a political achievement. He got less than he asked for, a truth both parties shared an interest in forgetting—the Republicans because they wanted to take credit for the program, the Democrats because they wanted to be able to blame the Republicans if it turned out badly. More important, it is always easier to persuade people that they ought to pay lower taxes—particularly when you assure them that doing so will result in higher government revenues, and that therefore no sacrifice of services will be required—than it is to persuade them they must pay more for less. The problem of governance was not solved during the 1980s, it merely disappeared from view. Now it is back, and with a vengeance.

The voters already were alarmingly cynical about politics and politicians, and the budget morass has made them more so. They are right to be angry at the cravenness of the politicians. But American politicians, on the whole, are no more craven than those of other advanced democracies, and still the level of public disgust is higher. The difference is not due exclusively to the inferior moral qualities of those who administer the American system. Some of it is owing to the peculiarities of the system itself—to its unique mechanical arrangements, which create unique disincentives to coherent and accountable government. For analytic if not for proscriptive purposes, it is worth standing back occasionally and taking a comparative look at those arrangements. The comparison may not show us how to solve our problems, but it can help us understand why solving them requires such extraordinary efforts.

Unlike more utopian and less free systems of government, democracy is rooted in a realistic theory of human nature. Are politicians (and the people who elect them) selfish? Of course they are: they are human. The genius of democracy, like the genius of the market, is supposed to be that it orchestrates the individual selfishnesses of individual men and women into a larger pattern that serves the good of the whole. But in the polity as in the marketplace, the rules that govern that orchestration help determine the pattern that results.

In every other advanced democracy (with the partial exception of France), the executive and legislative branches are elected together, govern together, and depend for their political survival on each other. If the chief executive loses an important legislative vote, his government falls, and not only he but also the legislators who brought him down must face the voters in a

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general election. An individual legislator who deserts his party's program on behalf of some parochial interest cannot do so without cost, especially if his is the governing party. Either he will be shut out of power by his party's leaders or, if his apostasy precipitates the government's fall, he will have to take his chances in a canvass that will be decided more on national than on parochial issues, since it provides voters with their only chance to determine the nation's direction.

The parliamentary systems of Europe differ from each other in important ways, particularly in their methods of representation. The British system of single-member districts elected by plurality allows strong government by a minority. (Mrs. Thatcher has ruled for eleven years with a Dukakis-sized share of the popular vote.) The continental systems, such as Germany's, mix in elements of proportional representation, guaranteeing that the government will represent a popular majority. However, all the parliamentary systems have one trait in common: they make it not only possible but politically advantageous for a party to promulgate a coherent program, enact that program once in office, and stand or fall on its success or failure. Under the American dispensation, these things are only barely possible, and only with heroic effort.

Consider a voter who is offered a menu of four choices, from which he is asked to pick any two: (*a*) higher taxes; (*b*) lower taxes; (*c*) ample services; (*d*) skimpy services. Only a fool would pick anything but (*b*) and (*c*). And only a fool would fail to see, on reflection, that there is something faulty about the menu.

In essence, this is the menu the American system sets before the American voter, and the American voter, who is not a fool, has more or less consistently chosen (*b*) and (*c*) by more or less consistently choosing Republican presidents and Democratic Congresses. Under the circumstances, the wonder is not that the system produces gridlock and incoherence, but that gridlock and incoherence are occasionally overcome.

"Divided government"—the term is again in vogue on the op-ed pages—is an obvious pitfall of the American system, and divided government we usually have. But American government is divided even when the same party controls both the executive and the legislature, so different are the institutional imperatives built into the two branches. Broadly speaking, the president represents a national constituency while individual members of the House and Senate represent parochial interests. For the latter, elected individually in 535 separate contests, the rewards for embracing parochialism, and the punishments for rejecting it, are large. Hence the spectacle of conservative Republicans vowing that not a hair of Social Security will be touched and liberal Democrats promising fights to the death against the closing of military bases in their districts.

The weaknesses of the system do not stop there. The legislative process itself, with its sprawling bazaar of committees and subcommittees, is a twenty-four-hour supermarket for special interests. When a powerful lobby focuses its energies on a single pressure point—a member of a conference committee at five minutes to midnight, say—it can often get its way even if it represents very few voters. The result is that legislation and programs tend to be badly designed. The pork barrel overflows. We end up with a health care system rife with underused CAT scanners and overflowing emergency rooms—a wasteful monster that costs more and delivers less than its counterparts elsewhere in the advanced industrial world. If this undertaxed (by world standards) country stubbornly resists paying more, part of the reason is that Americans are increasingly convinced that their government is constitutionally incapable of spending money wisely.

Since our system offers politicians few opportunities for carrying out coherent programs, it also offers few rewards for articulating them. Instead, campaigns are fought increasingly on hot-button "issues" isolated by polling and focus group research. Never mind that these issues are trivial or irrelevant. Remember the pledge of allegiance? Remember prison furloughs? "That's history," President-elect Bush told Barbara Walters a few days before his inauguration. "That doesn't mean anything anymore." But the radical discontinuity between the content of campaigning and the content of governing is not the fault of Mr. Bush alone, or of his fellow politicians. It is also the byproduct of an electoral and political system that fails to make the connection.

It should hardly be surprising that a consequence of all this is a growing despair about politics. We are in fact witnessing a steady depoliticization of public life in America, if politics is understood to mean the activity whereby people of like mind band together in the hope of benefiting the society as a whole. At the moment, the most virulent symptom of the retreat from politics is the retreat into hostile tribalism, as evidenced by the popularity of racial demagogues like David Duke and Louis Farrakhan. Other current expressions of this mood include the anti-incumbent mania, the movement for term limits, and the widespread enthusiasm for tax-limitation referenda. Its longer-run expressions include the steady drop in party identification, and, of course, the decline in voter participation. In 1988 only 50.15 percent of eligible voters bothered to cast ballots for president (vs. 60.8 percent in 1968). In 1986 only 36.4 percent turned out for off-year elections, and this year's turnout probably will be lower.

The point here is not to promote further despair about the efficacy of political action. Nor is it to advocate replacing Congress and the presidency with a parliament and prime minister. It is merely to suggest that though a good deal of public exasperation is justly directed at the president and Congress, some of what people blame them for is actually the effect of the system they must work within. It is to recommend less cynicism about politicians, and more realism about politics.

Meanwhile, what is to be done about the budget?

Our system does work in a crisis, so a crisis it must have. A fairly routine fiscal adjustment—the amount to be raised this year is only 0.6 percent of the gross nation-

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al product—has required the artificial creation of a national emergency. It's a familiar syndrome: we needed Johnson's "war on poverty" to justify elementary social programs, Carter's "moral equivalent of war" to justify moderate energy conservation, Bush's "war on drugs" to justify marginal increases in law enforcement.

Respectable opinion holds that the answer is "bipartisanship"—the kind of ad hoc, muddle-through, not-quite-legitimate coalition government that produced the unfair, incoherent budget deal rejected two weeks ago by congressional majorities of both parties. There is, however, another way. We have a suggestion for President Bush where the budget is concerned: govern. And we have a suggestion for the Democrats: let him govern, and go into opposition.

The House Democrats, under the leadership of Representative Dan Rostenkowski, have actually made a start in this direction. They have at last produced a tax package that reflects the purported values of their party and creates a clear political alternative. It would raise more money than any of the competing plans—$149 billion over five years—and it would do so largely at the expense of those who have benefited most handsomely from the regressive tax changes of the past decade. Taxpayers with incomes exceeding $200,000 would shoulder 63 percent of the new taxes. Even at that, according to Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, this richest 1 percent of the population would find its tax burden increased only by about half the amount by which it was reduced during the 1980s. People in this bracket currently pay 25.2 percent of their income in federal taxes; under the House Democrats' plan, they would pay 27 percent. This wouldn't exactly soak the rich, but it would at least sprinkle them.

It goes without saying that this plan will not be enacted. The Senate probably will not accept it; the White House certainly won't. What then?

At that point, we think, the Democrats should say to Mr. Bush and the Republicans: Very well, if you don't like our plan, let's see yours. We won't stand in your way. Develop your own tax and budget blueprint among yourselves, propose it, and bring it to a vote. We won't vote for it, of course; we'll vote "present" instead. Meanwhile, we will refine our own proposal (some input from Senator Moynihan would not be amiss), and we will advocate it from one end of the country to the other. But in this instance we will let you be the governing party. Our role will be to oppose, but not to obstruct. The responsibility will be yours; so will the credit or blame for the results. And in 1992, the people will decide.

Contrary to popular belief, courage and imagination are not particularly unusual in American political life. For the Democrats to take our suggestion would require plenty of both. The Europeans, whose systems are more skillfully designed to make positive use of political cowardice, can get along with lesser leaders. But it takes a better class of jockey to ride a lame horse gracefully. It's time for America to saddle up.

VISITING TEAM

Differing from Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's stand on the matter, the mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, has announced that he will see the U.N. team of inquiry mandated by the Security Council resolution that condemned Israel for the October 8 killing of nineteen Palestinians on the Temple Mount. Mr. Kollek clearly believes that Israel has nothing to fear from the facts surrounding the human tragedy at the holy site. Patient man that he is, moreover, he doubtless will try to explain to the secretary general's representatives that the Palestinian leadership has made a habit of provoking the kind of violence that produces martyrs for their cause, and that this episode was just such a provocation.

The national government has not been wise in refusing to meet the U.N.'s emissaries. Yet it is not hard to understand (and to sympathize with) its refusal. What credit can one give to this as an authentic information-seeking mission when the Security Council has acted as if it already knew all the salient facts—and has already declared Israel the guilty party? For all the fanfare heralding an alleged new world order, the U.N. has not changed the way it behaves with reference to the Arab conflict with Israel: whatever the facts, a majority against the Jewish state is axiomatic. This offers no comfort to those who cherish hopes about refurbishing the U.N.'s image and making it at last a useful institution.

There are abundant grotesqueries in this latest manifestation of the U.N.'s anti-Israel reflex, not least the fact that the world organization has been serenely indifferent to atrocities committed on a regular basis and on a grand scale by precisely the member nations most outraged by what happened in Jerusalem in early October. Hardly less grotesque is that the Bush administration feels obliged to defer in this matter to regimes that never scruple when they feel a massacre is justified by raison d'état. The kindest spin on Washington's decision to lead the charge against Israel in the Security Council is that it was required to keep the anti-Iraq coalition together. But that does not explain the egregiousness of administration statements since the U.N. vote. The Bush and Baker boys, who seem disgustingly and suspiciously at ease when they are hectoring Israel, have taken every available opportunity to vent their rancor at Jerusalem. The secretary of state was so malign as to write the Israeli foreign minister saying that if Israel didn't cooperate with the U.N., "there will be some who will compare you, unjustifiably, to Saddam Hussein." The coy qualifier will be readily understood as Mr. Baker's cynicism. And this particular secretary of state has been considerably friendlier to Hussein's regime than to any Israeli government. So, trapped by circumstance into unfamiliar opposition to Saddam

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Hussein, he makes the best of it—by comparing Israel to Iraq.

Margaret Tutwieler, the secretary's spokeswoman, explained that Mr. Baker's letter expressed an American feeling that "Israel should have been prepared to deal with violence and a riot without there being twenty-one dead and 150 wounded." This issue has been a catch-22 for Israel for years. Israel has tried from time to time to increase the force on the Temple Mount and thus to have less need to use actual force there when violence erupts. But just about every time the Israelis have expanded the police presence precisely for such preventive reasons, there is Palestinian violence against the expansion of that presence. It is intimidating, the Arabs say—which, we would have thought, was precisely the point. Inevitably the United States intercedes, formally and informally. Soon the presence is again reduced to a few handfuls. That's how it was on the day the Palestinian mob marched shouting its peaceful protest slogan, "Death to the Jews."

It is important to remember that the precipitating mayhem was the bombardment by massed Palestinians above the Western Wall of thousands of Jews at prayer below. Neither the U.N. resolution nor the multiple statements from U.S. officials could admit that the first targets in this awful episode were Jews. It is still being said that the mob came to the place where the mosques now stand (but where once stood the temple of old) to defend the area from Jewish zealots. In the event, these zealots never came close. Still their goal is not a pleasant one: they want to restore animal sacrifice, the slaughter of lambs in the temple rebuilt. It will not happen, either in our era or in the next. But the Palestinians came wishing the slaughter of Jews. We wish they could have been stopped without bloodshed, but stopping them was no crime.

Maestro

Leonard Bernstein's death last week at the age of 72 robbed us of one of the few figures in American musical life who fully deserved to be called maestro. Bernstein was the first American-trained conductor of an American orchestra, he was a brilliant composer for Broadway theater, and he was an extraordinary teacher, not least because he was the first classical musician who understood how television could be used to musical ends.

To grasp the magnitude of the loss, visit a record store: just this season Deutsche Grammophon has been releasing Bernstein's most recent recordings, which are marked by the arching gestures, slow tempos, and introverted theatricality of an aging master. In recent years Bernstein was welcomed as Karajan's only rival in Berlin and Vienna. (Those are cities and orchestras that did not exactly welcome people named Bernstein very long ago. Bernstein was a loyal son of his people, too, skillfully weaving elements of Jewish tradition into his composition and devoting himself passionately to the musical life of the new Jewish state.) In his last years he refused to be wooed back to the New York Philharmonic, which desperately requires a music director with the vision and the energy that Bernstein brought to it in the 1960s.

But even when Bernstein was away, he was always here, in the background of our musical life. It was easy to take him for granted, with his egoistic indulgences, his restless ambitions, his trendy politics. (The phrase "radical chic" was coined by Tom Wolfe to describe a cocktail party for the Black Panthers that was held in Bernstein's salon.) He was, in the good sense and the bad, a man of great gestures. He was typically American in the way that he married the high and the low, the vernacular and the rarefied, Broadway and La Scala, convention and innovation. The songs of *Our Town* and *West Side Story*, art songs that ordinary citizens have hummed for decades, were as much a part of his career as his attempts at musical linguistics as Harvard's Norton Lecturer. Generations of Americans were raised on Bernstein's Young People's Concerts and Omnibus broadcasts of the late 1950s and early 1960s. But even as he was educating the children (and their parents) on television, Bernstein was restoring Mahler's music to the contemporary repertory and returning the attention of the musical scene to Shostakovich and Haydn and his fellow American composers.

At the beginning of his career, there was the hope that Bernstein was going to be the savior of American music of the middle of the century. At the end of the century, it is clear that no savior came. Still, he was our musical life's most representative figure, our most vivid exponent of its striking weaknesses and its wildly optimistic strengths. Romantics have always shuttled between the sublime and the ridiculous, between spirituality and celebrity, between seriousness and delight; and Bernstein was perhaps the last American Romantic.

NOTEBOOK

HERE COME THE BOOKS: We're pleased to note the publication of senior editor Sidney Blumenthal's book on the 1988 electoral unpleasantness, *Pledging Allegiance: The Last Campaign of the Cold War* (Harper Collins). And you'll find essays you read here first in Stanislaw Baranczak's *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (Harvard University Press); in Irving Howe's *Selected Writings, 1950-1990* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich); and in Robert Hughes's *Nothing If Not Critical: Selected Essays on Art and Artists* (Knopf). While we're at it, contributing editor Robert Coles's *The Spiritual Life of Children* is due to be published by Houghton Mifflin in December. •

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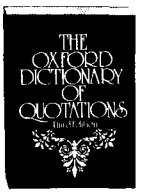

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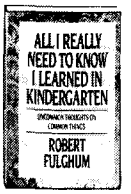

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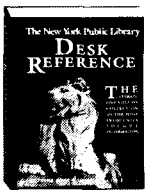

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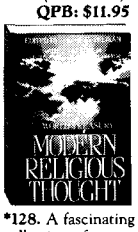

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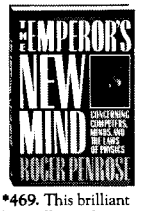

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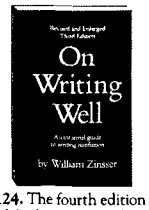

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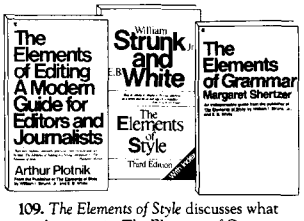
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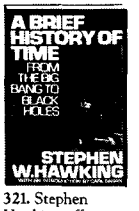

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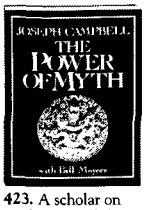

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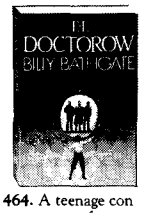

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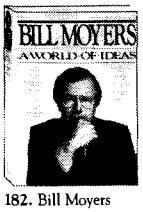

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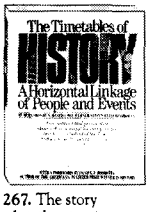

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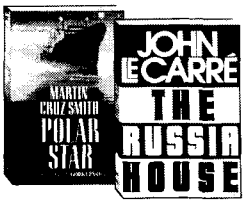

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BUSHED

By Fred Barnes

Some things John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, just doesn't understand. In a private chat months ago Representative Vin Weber of Minnesota, the brains behind House Republican whip Newt Gingrich, explained to Sununu that what's good for President Bush isn't necessarily good for Republicans. Sununu demurred. The most important determinant of the party's health is the president's approval rating, he argued. "I believed that during the Reagan administration," Weber answered, "but it's just not the case." What's needed, he said, is a "mature relationship" between congressional Republicans and the White House. "When we support the president, we should do it with our eyes wide open." Or not do it at all.

That episode was a preview. Weber was among the first Republicans to break with the White House line. Now a sizable majority of Republicans on Capitol Hill have done the same. This is a legacy of the 1990 budget battle that won't ever go away. Once a budget is finally passed, Bush, Sununu, and budget director Richard Darman will resume relations with Weber, Gingrich, and other renegade Republicans. "There are objective realities that force you to work together," says Gingrich. But the relationship will be different. More than ever, Bush will have to satisfy congressional Republicans to get their support.

Sununu and some other White House aides scorn the idea that the president has been permanently harmed by the budget fiasco. They're wrong. Bush's political world—his power in Washington, his reputation across the country—will never be the same. His presidential approval rating may rise and fall. Success against Saddam Hussein, if that happens, will inflate it. A recession will depress it. But Bush has lost the stature he had achieved after organizing the world against Iraq and before the budget fight.

Maybe that stature wasn't worth all that much in the first place. But it was worth something in Washington. With his stratospheric poll ratings, Bush made members of Congress uneasy about crossing him. His speech to the nation on October 2 changed that. It was the least effective presidential address to the nation since the invention of television. His pitch in favor of the bipartisan budget package was like a used car salesman's for a dented, poorly running car: at least it's transportation. "Clearly," Bush said, "each and every one of us can find fault with something in this agreement." His plea was overwhelmingly rejected. He was, in the words of a Republican House member, "impotent with the public." And Congress "was more scared of grass-roots sentiment than of Bush," a White House official conceded.

Sununu, for one, insists that the failure of the speech was not critical. Ronald Reagan gave nationally televised speeches, notably on the Nicaraguan contras, that didn't deliver votes on Capitol Hill. Reagan, however, usually managed to make the best of a bad situation (Democratic leaders were strongly opposed). Bush made the worst out of a not-so-bad situation (Democratic leaders were with him). Reagan also was abandoned by Republicans on several major votes, Bush aides note, and he recovered handsomely. But Reagan preserved his ideology, the tie that bound him to other Republicans. In the budget fight, Bush gave away the family jewels, the last ideological bond among Republicans—no new taxes.

The analogy between Bush and President Jimmy Carter has been overworked, but there's something to it. Neither had a solid base of support in his party. Each alienated the activist bloc: Carter the liberal diehards, Bush the conservatives. In Bush's case, the genius of his presidency, for the first twenty months at least, was his ability to move to the center yet keep conservatives on board. They're not on board anymore. Early on, Carter's White House staff lost the confidence of Democrats in Congress and of nearly everyone else in the political community. Now that's happened to Bush's staff too. "The notion that the White House is competent, if not ideological, has collapsed," said a Bush aide.

Another of Carter's shortcomings was that he didn't develop a sense of gratitude among Democrats in Congress, the feeling that he'd either helped them get there or stay there. Bush isn't touching off a ground swell of gratitude either. He's made the campaign torturous for Republican candidates this year. Reagan never did this, even in the 1982 recession. He always gave Republicans a slogan to rally around: stay the course, morning in America, etc. Bush not only jettisoned his tax pledge; he didn't substitute anything for it. Likewise on the budget. His first preference was unpopular and lost. And he has peevishly declined to tout an alternative.

The fear among Republicans is that the lack of a rallying point, coupled with the economic downturn, will hold down Republican voter turnout on election day. "The critical thing is: How do you motivate your own voters to turn out?" said Ed Rollins, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, on "Face the Nation" on October 14. A majority of Republican voters are under 40, he said, and they are "the most anti-tax in the country." It's important "to make sure our voters know that it's the Democrats that want to raise taxes, that we want to freeze spending, reduce spending."

How would they know that? The alternative budget of House Republicans calls for a spending freeze, but Bush won't endorse it. At a White House meeting on October 10 Republican Representative Guy Vander Jagt pleaded with Bush to change his tack. Republican House candidates are "hemorrhaging," he said. He urged Bush to jump behind a budget of low taxes and big spending cuts.

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Sununu intervened. He said the best thing that could happen to Republican candidates is a budget deal with Democrats, not an unwinnable fight for a Republican plan.

Once the budget fight is over, Bush has another big choice to make: what to do about the recession. His State of the Union address next January is bound to include an anti-recession package. Gingrich and Weber are already talking about one they'd like Bush to endorse. It includes cuts in the capital gains tax rate and the Social Security payroll tax, perhaps an increase in the individual exemption, spending cuts, enterprise zones. Democrats are likely to propose a jobs program and public works projects. My guess is that Bush, having learned a lesson from the budget scrap, won't try to compromise with Democrats. He'll become Mr. Partisan Republican again.

During Bush's dark days in October, a memo circulated at the White House on the analogy between Bush and President Harry Truman. It was written by James Pinkerton, the staffer in charge of big thinking. He recalled Truman's tepid performance in the off-year election of 1946. That experience prompted Truman to become the rabble-rousing reformer who vetoed Taft-Hartley, recognized Israel, and took on the political establishment in Congress. Truman became scrappy and bold, winning reelection in 1948. The suggestion is that Bush might pull a Truman. I'll believe it when I see it. •

ON THE HILL

GLASS HOUSE

By Douglas Waller

Last month a hapless John Kelly, the State Department's assistant secretary for the Middle East, admitted to Congress that the administration's long-running Iraq policy had sent mixed signals, which critics claim all but invited the invasion of Kuwait on August 2. Perhaps the policy "did not succeed," Kelly nervously conceded. "That's for sure," growled Representative Lee Hamilton of Indiana, senior member of the committee. Yet Hamilton himself had hardly been quick to censure Hussein. Six days before the invasion he had joined other farm state legislators, including House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt, Minority Leader Bob Michel, and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin, in gutting agricultural sanctions against Iraq.

There's a lot of repositioning going on these days. As one Senate aide put it, "Even by the standards of the U.S. Congress, the hypocrisy factor is fairly high here." Take Indiana Senator Richard Lugar, a senior Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, who called for Hussein's overthrow after the invasion: "Aggression has to be repelled along with the force that caused it," he declared. Yet when confronted with the grain sanctions, he had warned: "Passage of this legislation would badly undercut any possibility we have of influencing Iraqi behavior in areas from the peace process to human rights, terrorism to proliferation."

To be sure, there were those on Capitol Hill who protested. Sickened by Hussein's human rights abuses, Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum, whose state exported a million tons of wheat annually to Iraq, sponsored sweeping sanctions legislation. "I just can't believe that any Kansas farmer is going to want to sell subsidized wheat to a nation that allows its president to execute children," Kassebaum said. In the House, Representative Dan Glickman of Kansas introduced a similar sanctions measure. "At one point in our history we heard the tap, tap, tap of Neville Chamberlain's umbrella on the cobblestones of Munich," said Senator William Cohen of Maine just before the July 27 vote on the Senate sanctions amendment. "Now we are about to hear the rumble of the farm tractor on the bricks of Baghdad."

But these were not sentiments most congressmen wanted to hear. "I walked around feeling like I was a leper," says Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who tried to force the Senate to approve agricultural sanctions against Iraq. Although Congress and the administration did ban exports of munitions, chemicals, and military-related hardware, they left untouched the big-ticket items—more than $700 million annually in wheat, rice, chickens, corn, and dairy products. U.S. government-guaranteed loans for agriculture exports have totaled $5 billion since 1983. Representatives and senators from big farm states such as Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Texas, Indiana, and Arkansas voted practically en masse against Iraqi grain sanctions. To this day they make no apologies for their votes. "I will always oppose sanctions that single out the agricultural sector," said Representative Doug Bereuter of Nebraska. As one aide to a farm state congressman put it: "The Iraqis weren't pelting the Kuwaitis with grain when they invaded."

Nevertheless, the billions of dollars Hussein received in Commodity Credit Corporation guaranteed loans did free up cash for him to modernize his military. The food shipments are also helping keep his army fed through this siege. Administration officials estimate that Iraq has stockpiled three months' supply of food. "We provided this government basically all the food it needed for five years at subsidized prices," Glickman said.

The policy of appeasement goes back at least six years. Once the Reagan administration decided to tilt toward Baghdad in the Iran-Iraq war, Congress became a willing accomplice, particularly when the export dollars began to flow. After meeting with senior Iraqi officials in August 1984, Peter Galbraith, Claiborne Pell's Foreign Relations Committee aide, submitted a staff report warning that Hussein was running a neo-

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Stalinist state. The committee's majority Republican staff ordered the report watered down, Galbraith says. The administration planned to normalize diplomatic relations with Baghdad within months and did not want an embarrassing report coming out of Congress.

In September 1987 Galbraith toured Kurdistan in northern Iraq, where he witnessed the devastation Hussein had unleashed on this ethnic minority. "The Iraqi army had gone in and devastated the villages," Galbraith recalls. "One and a half million people were being relocated into concentration camps we could see being built." With Pell and the Democrats now in control of the committee, this time Galbraith's report wasn't watered down. It was merely ignored by Congress.

On August 25, 1988, five days after the cease-fire with Iran, Hussein's army launched a gas attack on the Kurds. The next month the Senate approved the sanctions legislation Pell had introduced. But farm state congressmen and manufacturing interests in the House, encouraged by the Agriculture Committee in the Senate, had the agriculture credits ban and Export-Import Bank sanctions stripped from the bill. By the end of October 1988, the House gave up passing a sanctions measure. "The lobbying against the bill was obscene," says one Senate staffer.

By the beginning of 1990 even some senior administration officials were having second thoughts about Washington's policy. But the public line stood: Hussein was an important component of the Arab-Israeli peace process and must be coddled diplomatically. Massaged by the Iraqi Embassy in Washington, senators willingly went along with the line. On April 12, as Hussein was preparing his army to invade Kuwait, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole led a Senate delegation to Baghdad for a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with him. The month before, Iraqi agents had been nabbed trying to smuggle American-made capacitors out of the country, and Hussein had executed a British journalist for alleged spying. But the Bush administration instructed the Dole delegation to convey a conciliatory message.

An Iraqi government transcript of the meeting reveals that the delegation delivered the message and more. "We are aware a large-scale campaign is being launched against us from the United States and Europe," Hussein complained. "Not from President Bush," said Dole. Hussein again threatened to attack Israel with chemical weapons if Israel struck first. Dole stressed "Iraq's importance in the peace process." Bush, he promised, would veto any sanctions Congress passed. At one point Dole assured Hussein that a Voice of America commentator who had broadcast an editorial critical of Iraq had been fired. (In fact, the commentator was not fired.)

Senator Alan Simpson offered Hussein public relations advice. "I believe your problem is with the Western media, not with the U.S. government, because you are isolated from the media and the press," he said. "The press is spoiled and conceited. All these journalists consider themselves brilliant political scientists. They do not want to see anything succeeding or achieving its objectives. My advice is that you allow those bastards to come here and see things for themselves."

Hussein seemed to have a mesmerizing effect on the senators. After sitting through an hour of anti-Israel rhetoric, Howard Metzenbaum, a staunch Israel backer, told the dictator: "I realize you are a strong and intelligent man, and that you want peace." On May 17 Metzenbaum took to the Senate floor to oppose sanctions against Iraq. "We ought to permit some opportunity to move toward peace in the Middle East," he pleaded. By June, however, after more bellicose anti-Israel statements from Hussein, Metzenbaum favored full sanctions.

But Hussein still had Dole in his corner. Dole played a key role in the Senate in derailing sanctions legislation. Senate Republican and Democratic sources say that up until the day of the invasion, Dole had placed a legislative "hold" on a Banking Committee bill that contained sanctions against Iraq—a parliamentary maneuver that prevented the measure from being considered on the floor.

Even those members who did support sanctions felt little urgency in passing them. California Representative Howard Berman, a relatively junior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee who led the House battle for full restrictions, introduced a comprehensive sanctions bill last April. But it wasn't until the day before the invasion that Hamilton and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Dante Fascell got the panel to pass it. On August 2, when Fascell learned of the Iraqi attack, he rushed the Berman bill to the House floor and attached the executive order Bush had already signed, which called for a total embargo on Iraq and a freeze on its assets in the United States.

The House approved the Berman bill with the Bush embargo. But the Senate didn't. On August 3, the day after the invasion, staffers on the Senate Banking Committee frantically tried to get unanimous consent to have the Senate take up the bill that night before the chamber adjourned for its August recess. The Banking Committee got clearance from the Democratic side. But another "hold" came from Senate Republicans, blocking consideration of the measure. Holds are anonymously placed, and so far no Republican senator has rushed to confess. Dole's aides insist that he wasn't responsible.

A comprehensive sanctions bill finally passed the Senate on September 13. The Senate and House are expected to finish their conference on sanctions legislation this week—more than two months after the invasion of Kuwait. In any case, Bush's executive order for an embargo makes the measure moot. With this record, Congress's Iraqi policy makes the administration's look almost statesmanlike.

DOUGLAS WALLER is a Washington correspondent for *Newsweek*.

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LENINGRAD POSTCARD

POSTWAR BLUES

By Joshua Muravchik

First day of school. I accompany my Leningrad hosts to the orientation ceremony for their daughter's second-grade class. The concrete steps of the school are chipped down to their reinforcing rods. Shards of glass hang from the frames of several broken windows. But the little girls look radiant in their black dresses, white aprons, lace cuffs and collars, and taffeta bows, each clutching a bouquet of fresh flowers for the teacher.

While scores of parents crowd into the school gym for a view or a snapshot, many hanging from the exercise equipment along the walls, a color guard of three upperclassmen goose-steps to the front, awing the pinafored dainties. "We must rebuild education in this country," my host whispers earnestly. A beginning has been made, he says: the bust of Lenin that used to stand in the main vestibule had just been moved to the nurse's office "facing the wall."

Despite the good cheer at the school, Russia today feels like nothing so much as a country on the morrow of a terrible war. The conference I'm here for—the Second International Human Rights Conference, sequel to one held more or less illegally in Krakow in August 1988—devolves into a babel of lamentations, as if it were some vast ward near the front lines, devoid of doctors or medicine but overflowing with casualties, each moaning out his pain. Armenians and Azerbaijanis and Georgians and Lithuanians and Uzbeks and representatives of each of the other republics pour forth their grievances against the Soviet government and, in some cases, against one another. A legless man, carrying himself proudly erect on a little dolly, speaks eloquently of the plight of invalids. There are 28 million of them in the Soviet Union, he says, hidden in their homes because the facilities for their care that had existed before the Revolution were closed down by the Bolsheviks. Orphans, he continues, are sometimes packed off to psychiatric hospitals while the orphanage staff takes summer vacation, and if the children protest they are injected with psychotropic drugs.

The leader of an organization of the mothers of soldiers says thousands of Soviet servicemen have perished from accidents and mistreatment outside of combat situations during the years of perestroika. She says that her son, like many others, had been delivered home in a zinc coffin with a death certificate specifying cardiovascular disease. But when she had the coffin opened, she found his body covered with bruises and puncture wounds. Next, a Father Edelshtein, forbiddingly stiff in his black robes, denounces the penetration of the Russian Orthodox patriarchy by agents of the state—and he also denounces smokers at the conference for violating the human rights of non-smokers. And so it goes.

The privations of daily life have something of the quality of wartime or its aftermath, too. The Russians pronounce the name of their currency the "rubble," and to American ears it makes a natural pun about the state of their economy. Many things can be had for dollars, but who can afford dollars? A Soviet professional's wages average 250 to 300 rubles per month, which you can buy in any taxi for about twenty dollars. I treat the college-age daughter of my hosts in Moscow to a cone at a hard-currency Baskin Robbins located in a tourist hotel: one scoop of Jamoca Almond Fudge, one of Pistachio. "I'll remember this my whole life," she says fervently, making my heart sink.

By now everyone knows about the bare shelves, the endless queues, the humiliating shortages of bread and cigarettes and everything else. But the privations afflict the eye as well. The quality of construction is as appalling as the gray slab Stalinist architecture superimposed like a canker on the face of prerevolutionary St. Petersburg, one of the world's most beautiful cities. Paving stones, tiles, and floorboards never quite fit. Where missing pieces are replaced, the new ones never match. The flat where I'm staying is on the eighth floor of a tenement whose staircase contains casement windows at each landing that open out at floor level. These windows are each about three feet high and a foot wide, without any grate or bar behind, inviting any toddler to an unimpeded eight-story fall. From my flat I watch two men on a construction site move a large load of concrete from where it was mixed to where it needs to be poured, twenty-five or thirty yards away. No wheelbarrow is in sight. They carry it one shovelful at a time.

And the deprivations suffered by Soviet citizens are not just material. They lack the organizational experience that Americans get in churches, PTAs, and civic associations. Our conference is chaos. The agenda changes constantly but is never posted. On the fourth day I discover the "information" desk; it is behind the stage, and only the conference staff knows of its existence. The translation is incompetent and at times vanishes altogether. The organizers eagerly give a prime speaking slot (somewhere between Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis and AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland) to one A. V. Avadhuta, because they are so happy to have a representative from India. But despite his orange turban and robes, A. V. Avadhuta turns out to be a New Yorker given this name by some guru, from whom he brings a message urging the conference not to focus on human rights to the

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exclusion of those of "the plants and animals."

There is also a drastic deprivation of information. My host asks me to settle a dispute he is having with his father: "Who started the Russo-Finnish war?" A Moscow friend is majoring in political economy at Moscow State University, where her basic text is Marx's *Capital*. Thanks to glasnost her class also shares the library's single copy of a 1950s edition of Paul Samuelson's *Economics*, a book they prize not only for its exciting ideas but also, she says without a trace of irony, for its lively prose.

A widespread and indiscriminate sense of nonmaterial deprivation, of having been left behind by Western culture, expresses itself in all sorts of curious ways. The hot items in Leningrad's bookstores, I'm told, are Freud and Dale Carnegie. The busiest peddler at my subway stop is selling mimeographed porn, featuring a tableau of drawings of various positions for coitus. And Hare Krishna groups (they're Western, too, after all) jingle through the streets.

As a result of this information deficit, Soviet citizens seem unpracticed in reality-testing. The conference's final resolution declares, implausibly, "Contrary to popular international opinion, the human rights situation in the USSR has not improved . . . during the past several years." An earnest young Armenian tells me that Azerbaijanis are now eating Armenians. Another man posts a huge exhibit exposing a new laser gun used by the KGB, replete with photos of lesions on his own tongue allegedly inflicted by this weapon. In a country where so many mind-boggling horrors have occurred, who knows what to believe?

On the last day of the conference, excursions are organized by the Leningrad city council. Normally foreign visitors are taken to the czar's sumptuous summer residence in Petrodvorets. But this time we set out for a women's prison. This being the time of glasnost, we are provided with a bus and an interpreter from Intourist who describes the sights of the city in English and French as we pull out of town. The "Women's Colony of the Leningrad Region" houses some 800 first offenders, serving sentences of one to fifteen years for crimes ranging from picking pockets to murder, or so we are told by the camp's avuncular commandant, a Colonel Lebedev. "Education takes priority over punishment," he says. The prison officials make no protest when the Poles in our group put Solidarity stickers on the walls; on the contrary, the colonel allows a Solidarity pin to be affixed to his lapel and smiles for snapshots. We are given freedom to mingle with the inmates, who live in dormitories, not cells. We hear a few complaints, but most tell us that they are not mistreated, that the food is adequate, and that no one is there for political reasons.

We are on our way out when one of our group who speaks Russian demands access to a small outbuilding, saying a prisoner told him it contains punishment cells. After some argument we are admitted to the building. A heavy, windowless outer cell door is opened at our demand, revealing a terrible scene. Behind prison bars are two women in a completely bare cell; nothing to sit on but the cold floor. There is no heat even though the temperature is already in the 40-degree range. Instead of the uniforms the other prisoners wear, these women have on nothing but thin sleeveless smocks. A single high window is boarded over, depriving them of all light and ventilation. The cell has no toilet or faucet, just two buckets, one for their drinking water, one for their wastes. Their infraction: illicitly exchanging food or cigarettes through the camp's fence. Their term of punishment is the standard: fifteen days.

It is said we have won the cold war, but it is hard not to wonder if the Russians wouldn't be better off had we won it more literally. Then we could now do for them what we did for Japan and Germany. Indeed, one current joke in Leningrad suggests declaring war on Finland and immediately surrendering. Another asks who is to blame for today's plight. Answer: Peter the Great. If he hadn't defeated the Swedes, Russia would be part of Sweden.

In reality, most of their salvation will have to come from within. I see lapel pins and sweatshirts emblazoned in Cyrillic: St. Petersburg. Songs of the White Guards are the current musical vogue. A Muscovite friend explains that the point is not just to spite the "Commies"—a word some young workers told me is their harshest epithet. It is to try to recapture some shreds of a usable past so as not to have to rely exclusively on Western models in rebuilding their country.

Amid the postbellum gloom, I see a few hopeful signs. Leningrad's non-Communist mayor, Anatoly Sobchak, gives a thoughtful speech, the conference's best, about the requisites of democratic life. I see promise too in people like Vladimir, a gangly, disheveled member of the conference staff and leader of a successful drive to establish a Hyde Park in Leningrad, who acknowledged the fearful rise of anti-Semitic groups (and estimated that half of the city's 120,000 Jews would soon flee) but was determined to remain in his hometown and contribute to the reconstruction of Jewish culture. Above all, there is hope in that scene on the first day of school—not only in the unblemished features of the little girls but in the unseen maternal exertions that must have been required to produce such doll-like perfection, evidence of a people not yet fully demoralized.

Leningrad will surely be St. Petersburg again, soon. But changing the city's name will be easier than changing its face—the ugly Stalinist architecture that makes its beauty more poignant than inspiring—and that, in turn, will be easier than demolishing and replacing the perverse social and psychological architecture that blights the lives of its people.

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of *Exporting Democracy*, to be published by AEI this fall.

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From anarchism to neoauthoritarianism.

THE DOPE ON DANA

By Karen Lehrman

Dana Rohrabacher, a freshman representative from California, sports a beard, bodysurfs, plays the guitar, counts Van Halen lead singer Sammy Hagar as a close friend, and represents an ultraconservative part of Southern California. In this year's NEA debate he again established himself as the House's most enthusiastic critic of the supposedly obscenity-ridden arts agency, while continuing to negotiate the rights to his screenplay "The French Doctoresse," a tale he says he'll make as steamy as it takes to sell it. He calls himself a free marketeer, yet would like the United States to threaten Japan with trade restrictions. In his early adulthood he preached anarchy, smoked pot and hash, and did LSD; these days he pushes tough anti-drug laws. "Consistency mattered to me a lot when I was young," says Rohrabacher. "Now I realize it doesn't mean very much."

You have heard of neoconservatives. Rohrabacher, 43, is more like a neoauthoritarian, traveling—with remarkably little ideological strain—from early libertarianism to an alliance with Jesse Helms. Rohrabacher began political life as a Barry Goldwater fan (a folk band he led was nicknamed "The Goldwaters"), and when Ronald Reagan ran for California governor in 1966 he signed on as Los Angeles County chairman of Youth for Reagan. The campaign high command wanted to disband the youth organization after the primary, but Rohrabacher camped out all night in Reagan's backyard, hoping to ask him to intervene. In the morning Nancy tried to shoo away the scruffy teenager, but Ron emerged, half-shaven and in a bathrobe, to hear him out. The organization stayed.

In 1967 Rohrabacher became chairman of the California chapter of the conservative Young Americans for Freedom. A couple of years later, though, he, along with some other YAFers, drifted into a less uptight crowd. Staunchly anti-Communist, they nevertheless were disillusioned with the Vietnam War and, of course, with government in general. They began to meet every other Saturday night in Rohrabacher's apartment, distinctive for a stolen Speed Limit sign with the letters "cc" scrawled in next to the number 10 (needle doses are measured in cubic centimeters). Rohrabacher won't talk about his "past personal mistakes." But according to others in the group, they would discuss politics and philosophy, listen to Steppenwolf and Jefferson Airplane, and smoke pot on the roof; American flag rolling papers were considered choice. By April 1969 Rohrabacher had been purged as YAF state chair for being obnoxiously libertarian over the draft and drug legalization.

He announced he was an anarchist (he now says "abolitionist"), and became one of the cultish followers of Robert LeFevre, a reputedly mesmerizing anarchist-pacifist teacher who believed it was immoral for both individuals and countries to use force in self-defense, and who disapproved of voting (you would be violating the will of the people you vote against). LeFevre would preach to young libertarians at weekend seminars at his Rampart College in Santa Ana. Rohrabacher says he never really bought LeFevre's line on pacifism, though he did become one of the college's few paid speakers.

The voting theory must not have made a great impression either, because even while he was calling, in one of his numerous folk ballads, for an "Anarchist Revolution" ("First we're gonna blow it up, then we're gonna tear it down . . ."—to the tune of "Alouette"), he began talking about running for public office. He had gotten married (the ceremony was performed by a Baptist minister in a park, but no one ever sent in the license; he was "divorced" with similar lack of formality three years later) and had to find a real job. Rohrabacher says this brought him off his ideological high. In 1972, at age 25, he became a reporter for a local news service in Los Angeles, and began to speak less openly about his anarchist beliefs and to make contacts with more traditional conservatives. He announced that, as a Christian, he no longer believed he should use drugs. With the Vietnam War no longer posing a moral roadblock, fighting communism had returned as his No. 1 cause. In 1975 he worked in Reagan's first presidential campaign. His next move was to write editorials for *The Orange County Register*, a libertarian-leaning conservative daily. According to Gene Berkman, an old libertarian friend, one of Rohrabacher's editorials, written in 1979, called for the legalization of drugs. Called back to work for Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, he landed a job as a speechwriter.

Soon after arriving at the Reagan White House, Rohrabacher acquired a reputation as the resident eccentric. He was often found working in shorts, sneakers, and a floppy hat. His office in the Old Executive Office Building looked more like a college dorm room than the working area of a young Reaganaut, with posters of Clint Eastwood on the walls and jeans, papers, and books all over the place. Rohrabacher carried around a pocketful of bullets from Afghan freedom fighters. One of the folk songs he composed during this period was called "White House Blues": "I work at the White House at the NSC. Why is everybody pickin' on me . . . ? We've been here since 1981, bombin' Qaddafi and havin' fun."

After seven years in the White House, Rohrabacher quit to run for Congress in California's 42nd district. The Republican incumbent, Daniel Lungren, was stepping down. It was a long shot: Rohrabacher was a complete unknown who hadn't lived in the district—white, middle class to affluent, and solidly Republican—for ten

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years. He ran as a true-blue Reagan Republican, with the president's picture often more prominent than his own in his campaign literature. He downplayed his libertarian past as the "excessive idealism of my youth" (though he asked libertarians for money and support). At a YAF conference before the primary he said he was against drug legalization. When Berkman later asked him why he had changed his position, Rohrabacher said he wouldn't have a chance in the primary if he came out for legalization. He asked his friends not to talk about his past drug use, and they complied. Their understanding, according to Berkman, was that Rohrabacher would, at the very least, refrain from noisy anti-drug crusading. According to campaign manager and longtime friend Shawn Steel, Rohrabacher won because the district "didn't know enough about him." He also won because he disclosed that the leading primary contender, an Orange County supervisor, never received the college degree she had been claiming for twenty-five years. In that district, Republican nomination is tantamount to election. Just to make sure, though, he brought in his White House sidekick Ollie North for a couple of fund-raisers, netting more than $100,000. In November, he won the seat with two-thirds of the vote.

Rohrabacher returned to a Washington that was very different from the one he had left only nine months before. With communism on the wane, he was a rebel in search of a cause. Jesse Helms provided one. In July 1989 Helms suggested that Rohrabacher lead the House floor fight for his amendment to the NEA appropriations bill. The Helms amendment detailed severe restrictions on the type of art the NEA could fund. Rohrabacher quickly dropped his own amendment, which sought to abolish the agency altogether, and seized the opportunity to become Helms's point man. His impassioned condemnation of government funding of obscene, offensive, or "weird" art could soon be found in nearly every news story and debate on the NEA, including on "MacNeil-Lehrer," "Face the Nation," and "Crossfire." Congress eventually passed a modified version of the Helms amendment.

But Rohrabacher didn't let up. In a campaign coordinated with the American Family Association and various other fundamentalist groups, Rohrabacher sent out a series of "Dear Colleague" letters that "exposed" the artistic sins of aberrant NEA recipients. His claims were sometimes a little misleading. One letter shows a picture of Christ with a syringe protruding from his arm. It doesn't say that this is a severely cropped image from part of a much larger work by David Wojnarowicz. Rohrabacher wrote to constituents of other districts that the specialty of John Fleck, a performance artist whose grant application was ultimately rejected, was "urinating on a picture of Jesus Christ" during his show. Fleck does in fact urinate onstage, but into a prop commode with the picture above it.

Rohrabacher's other chief tactic was implicitly or explicitly branding colleagues who supported the NEA as proponents of pornography. This culminated in his final Dear Colleague letter before the vote this year, which came attached to a copy of a letter to Congress signed by numerous "pro-family" organizations. Quoting the attached, Rohrabacher writes that these groups "consider a vote . . . for continued funding of the NEA without Rohrabacher restrictions—to be a vote to allow taxpayer-funded pornography to continue." Rohrabacher's new amendment called for an expanded litany of no-no's, including "any part of an actual human embryo or fetus." The amendment died on the House floor.

Rohrabacher is at pains to distance himself from Helms. He says he's never even had a meeting with the senator on the subject; repeatedly states that his opposition to the NEA ("this rogue agency") is grounded on the principle of minimal government, not censorship (he says that he too, after all, is an artist); and says that he would still prefer to abolish the agency. He also believes that groups that do not receive government money, such as 2 Live Crew, should not be banned. Yet Rohrabacher has found it useful to talk about art and pornography in a self-righteous, moralistic tone that is often indistinguishable from that of Helms. "An orgy of degenerate depravity" is what he called Wojnarowicz's NEA-funded show "Tongues of Flame." "The art is sickeningly violent, sexually explicit, homoerotic, anti-religious and nihilistic."

At the same time, there's a perverse prurience in the way Rohrabacher describes the NEA-funded projects he finds distasteful—as though the Rohrabacher of the past were enjoying a good joke on the bureaucratic state. In one Dear Colleague letter, which was also entered into the *Congressional Record*, he tells his colleagues that in Annie Sprinkle's show at The Kitchen in New York, she "masturbates with various 'sex toys' until she experiences orgasms; performs oral sex with rubber penises, inviting the audience to massage her breasts," and "opens her vaginal canal . . . and invites audience members . . . to inspect her." (The NEA says its grant to The Kitchen was fully expended before Sprinkle's performance.)

As Rohrabacher tires of battling artists, there's a good chance he will take on drug users. Last year he introduced legislation that would allow his colleagues to use public funds to drug-test themselves and their staffs, the kind of proposal that would force members to support it—or be labeled pro-drug in the next election. "Once these funds are available, the public will be able to determine who's serious and who's not about the war on drugs by what policy they've introduced in their own offices," Rohrabacher told a reporter last year.

During his campaign Rohrabacher had told his old friend Berkman that if he won, he'd go along with the administration's anti-drug program for a couple of years, that interdiction would be proved ineffective, and that then maybe he'd push for legalization. (Rohrabacher confirms this account, but denies using the word legalization.) This scenario seems unlikely now: "My concern for people's lives overrides any libertarian ideal that people can do whatever they want," he told me. Last May, when he signed on to the Gramm-Gingrich Nation-

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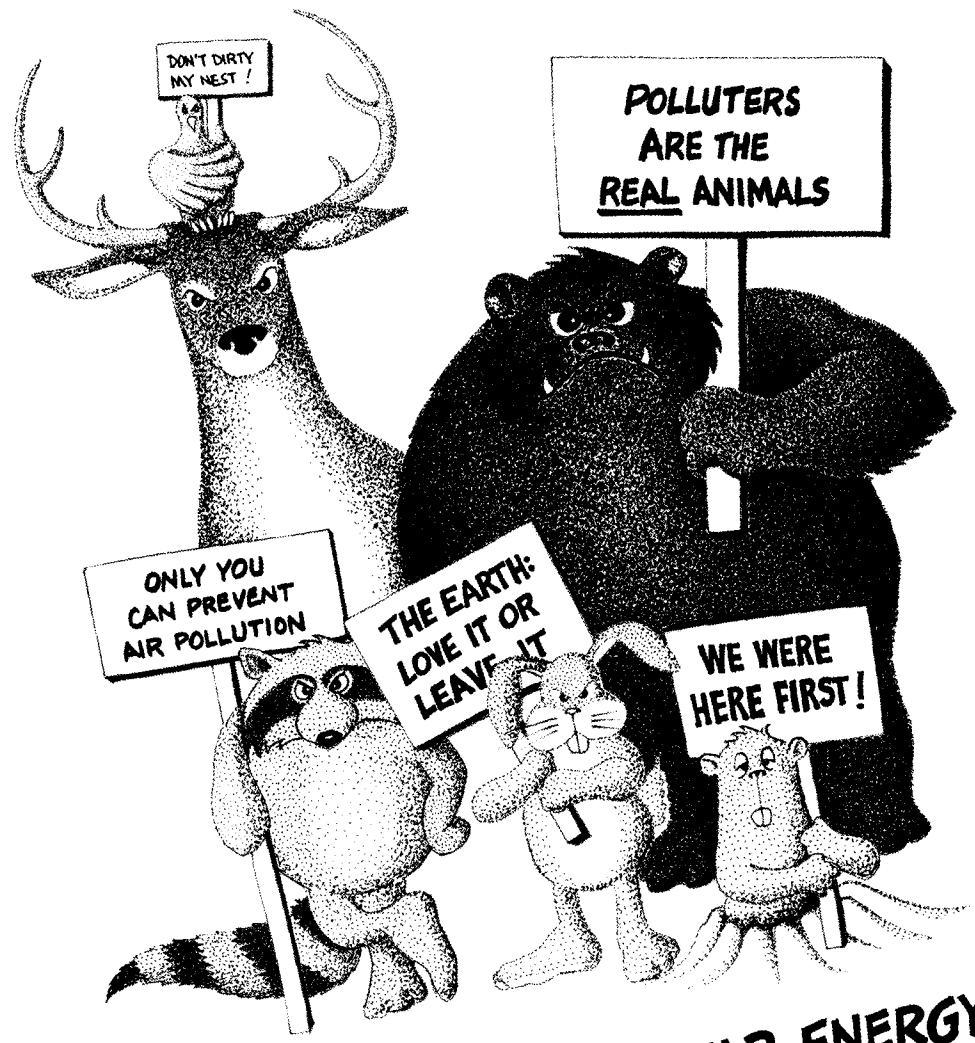
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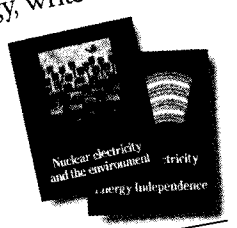

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al Drug and Crime Emergency Act, several of his old friends believed he lost the immunity they had granted him during his first campaign. Rohrabacher says that he became a co-sponsor because Gingrich asked him, but that he would have supported the bill anyway. It calls for declaring a national emergency for five years during which, among other things, drug prisoners—under mandatory minimum sentences without parole—can be housed in tents and farmed out to work for private industry, and citizens would be rewarded for snitching on drug dealers. For selling pot, you would get five years in prison, no release. Universities receiving federal funds would have to "impose sanctions" on students possessing or using drugs "up to and including expulsion."

Luckily for Dana Rohrabacher (B.A. 1969, Long Beach State), the bill's not retroactive. •

Post-apartheid's new twist.

APPLES AND ORANGES

By Christopher Hope

MORGENZON, SOUTH AFRICA

Drive a couple of hours east of the gold mines of Johannesburg and you'll find the little hamlet of Morgenzon, a rock-solid Afrikaner farming town with a population of fewer than a thousand whites. It is also a town divided against itself. On one side are the locals, who say they accept the new South Africa. "I don't care who governs this country," says a young boy with elaborate honey locks, "as long as there is someone to clean my car." On the other side are the Orange Workers, mostly newcomers, who have made Morgenzon their headquarters. The Orange Workers too accept the inevitability of a new South Africa, but they are advocating a sort of reverse apartheid: their own, all white, homeland.

Founded in 1980, the Orange Workers Federation is part of a loose but vital network of official and clandestine Afrikaner resistance groups that are somewhat uneasily held together by the designation the "White Right." The name Orange Workers celebrates the memory of Dutch King William of Orange and his seventeenth-century victories over Catholics in Ireland, and the color is as powerful a symbol for extremist Afrikaners as it is for Ulster Protestants. What cements all the Afrikaner dissidents together is the belief that, as Eugene Terre'Blanche, the militant leader of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, says, when the new South Africa is inaugurated, "We won't live in it."

The Orange Workers wield disproportionate power in Morgenzon. Not only will they not sell to or buy from blacks. They believe that the only way the Afrikaner can survive in Africa is to return to first principles—to withdraw, trek back into the past, establish a Boer retreat where Afrikaner customs, crafts, Calvinist faith, and tribal identity may be fostered. They are the aspirant Amish of Southern Africa.

Whatever the ethics of this position, its practicality is doubtful. At the door of the town, opposite the whites-only graveyard, lies the black township. Six years ago 2,000 black people lived here. Today there are between 6,000 and 8,000. Despite the Orange Workers' attempt to make the town an island of pure Afrikanerdom, Morgenzon is part of South Africa, and South Africa's population is doubling every thirty years, much of it black, with a thousand people entering the job market each month.

Nevertheless, now that the South Africa of classical apartheid is dead and gone, the Orange Workers insist on their right to a separate place of their own, an independent sovereign Boer state where they may live in peace. The historical parallel is the Boer War of 1899 to 1902, which the Orange Workers refer to as the "Second Freedom War" (the first was fought in the 1870s). Now Afrikaners are preparing for what they call the "Third Freedom War."

Hendrik Verwoerd is the son of the Dutch immigrant of the same name who devised and set up apartheid as prime minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966. I remember the old Verwoerd from my childhood, and Verwoerd Jr. does not possess his father's icy charisma. Careful and deliberate in his speech, he might be a teacher or a minister. His father's portrait dominates the wall of his living room and looks down his nose at me. The eyes are a glacial blue, the tie bold red, and his face has that look of almost frozen repose. But the younger Verwoerd has something of his father's bleak determination. I put it to him that it would have been better had the idea of an Afrikaner homeland been realized years before, an Afrikanerstan along the lines of the Bantustans set up by his father. A great opportunity lost, he agrees.

Yet the idea of a homeland for the Afrikaner is now deeper and more passionate than ever. "The Afrikaner will not suffer further humiliation. The aim of the Orange Workers is to mobilize and inspire. We *will* be given a place. The coming black unified state is something Afrikaners will not accept. It's a matter of life and death for us. I hope that other forces will recognize this."

But whom will the Afrikaners fight? And, more pointedly, for what will they be fighting? Verwoerd shows me his map. He points to a patchwork outline of the future Afrikaner homeland, an area arcing in an incomplete crescent around Johannesburg, beginning on the west Rand and stretching up hundreds of miles northward. The new state circles Johannesburg, the industrial heartland of South Africa. It would include in its sweep gold and coal mines, power stations, iron and steel

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works, platinum and titanium. "It will be a place where white Afrikaners are already established," says Verwoerd. "Where they don't have to ask permission."

The border between the Afrikaner people's state and a future multiracial South Africa might be no more than a suburban street or a wire fence, but it will mark the absolute demarcation between separate countries. This will be the result of the Third Freedom War. Verwoerd is careful to argue for the reasonableness of the struggle. After all, he says, Afrikaner history is one of struggle, first against the black tribes of Africa, then against the British army. But those wars have been shown to have ended badly. They "were fought for domination," Verwoerd admits. "Now we fight for ourselves, for our own." He offers an unexpected example: "When Hitler fought for Germany and for Germans, he won respect. It was only when he began invading other territories, other countries, that the world rose against him. We don't want to invade anybody, we don't want anything except that which is our own. We are not going to make Hitler's mistake. We are not going to be that stupid."

Perhaps the most remarkable member of the Orange Movement is Johan Fischer. Fischer is the only farmer in Morgenzon to have weaned himself off black labor. With the help of his wife and his four daughters he has run his farm on his own for twelve years, and makes it pay. Fischer is not without ironic understanding for Mandela's position. Since white South Africans own nearly 90 percent of the land, Fischer reckons, some of that land is going to have to be given to blacks under the new government. Anything else is not real change at all: "It will simply be an exchange of black bossism for white." The de Klerk government, by appearing to offer the Afrikaner a method of painless transition from white rule to black regime, is pulling a fast one. The implicit promise is that nothing really will change. For the moment at least the Afrikaner has been fooled. But when the bubble bursts and the ANC demands real power, the Afrikaner will rebel. But not now. Not yet. "Because people don't move until the seat hots up." Fischer is not bitter about the approaching struggle, but he's ready. "If they touch my farm, I'll fight."

A huge metal moon hangs over Morgenzon as Fischer walks me to my car. The moonlight is bright on his fine herd of Fresians, the black and white contrasts sharp and strong. Over on the horizon the smoke from the coal-fired power stations that fuel the great industrial area of Witwatersrand a few hundred kilometers to the east pour out their sulfurous smoke into the indifferent African evening. "Pollution," says Fischer, "is a growing problem. Purification is a long way off."

CHRISTOPHER HOPE is a South African-born novelist.

A how-to guide on getting a grant.

THE FOUNDATION GAME

By Robert Wright

Autumn is upon us. The leaves are turning gold. The end of another year is dimly within sight. And still you haven't won a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant. Neither have I.

This year's list of winners was, as usual, sufficient to keep writers, artists, academics, and activists all across the country waiting for next year's list, harboring the barely conscious and certainly unspoken hope that maybe they will be on it. After all, the thirty-six winners—at least to judge by the newspaper sketches—don't seem so damn special. But, of course, on careful examination, special is exactly what they turn out to be. Take Maria Varela. She may at first sound like just another community organizer. But look closer: she was "co-founder of Ganadas del Valle, a sheep-ranching and weaving cooperative in Los Ojos, N.M." Can you top that?

And then there are the winners who are special in the more conventional sense of the word. Though the MacArthurs were meant to liberate the gifted from the burdens of income-earning, a few grants always go to people who haven't exactly been struggling in vain for recognition and creative freedom. (This year's prime example is Susan Sontag.)

Face it—you're probably not special enough in either sense of the word to win a genius grant. If you want subsidies for your thoughts and actions, you'll have to get them the old-fashioned way: go to a foundation and convince people with money that you deserve some. Here are a few tips.

Tip 1. Get affiliated. Hardly any of the $7 billion that American foundations hand out each year is earmarked for individuals. That's one reason the MacArthur grants are so highly prized. Instead the money goes to colleges, research institutes (including think tanks), com-

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munity service groups, museums, libraries, and other non-profit organizations. So, for starters, you might consider getting an important job at one of these places. You can then seek money more or less autonomously, eventually even building your own Institute within the sponsoring institution, although your sponsor will want a hefty percentage to cover "overhead."

If you'd rather eliminate the middleman, you can start your own non-profit. This was the tack taken by socially conscious tycoon Ted Turner in founding the Better World Society, which elicits grants from foundations for the production of TV documentaries, such as the PBS series "Only One Earth." Sometimes, having attracted tax-exempt funding via his non-profit Society, Turner runs the documentaries on his for-profit TV networks or other for-profit networks. But don't bother to notify local authorities. The line between non-profit and profit is much blurred, and apparently there's usually nothing illegal about this. The most notorious recent example is the use of Gannett Foundation money to buy thousands of copies of former Gannett Co. chairman Allen Neuharth's autobiography, which helped put it on *The New York Times* best-seller list, a status that usually brings tens of thousands of additional sales.

Tip 2. Become an opera singer or a molecular biologist. In the recent book *Charity Begins at Home*, Teresa Odendahl complained about the circularity of philanthropy. A good deal of the largess coming from foundations (and corporations and rich people) winds up where it started: in the upper echelons of society—in the art museums, concert halls, and community theaters that are both run and patronized by the sorts of people who can afford to make charitable donations. Specifically, 15 percent of foundation money goes to "cultural activities." To those philistines (like me) who can conceive of higher social priorities than building a life-support system for opera, that sounds like plenty. Thankfully, a larger chunk—about a third of the money—goes to projects with more concrete benefits, in health care or the medical or natural sciences. And a bit more than a third goes into that vast netherland between right-brain and left-brain, where ideas and programs in the social sciences and public policy vie for attention. It is within this region, whose capital is Washington, D.C., that the remaining tips are most applicable.

Tip 3. Be cognizant of the manifold implications of your work. Here is the situation: you have interests; the foundation's program officers (your key contacts in this process) have interests; the members of the foundation's board of directors have interests. Is there anyplace where all these interests intersect? "You look at the topic that will both legitimately be of value to the study and capture the fancy of the program officer," says Warren Miller, a political scientist at Arizona State University who for decades has been a key grant getter for the National Election Studies project, the study of voting behavior that yielded the classic work *The American Voter* in 1960 and has been adding to its database ever since. In other words, a truly proportional representation of your project may not be a good idea. "It's not clear deceit," Miller says. "But you don't cut off your nose to spite your face, either."

Tip 4. Promise to save the world. By all accounts the past several decades have seen a sharp drop in support for "basic" social science work—research with no immediate practical application. Miller remembers that during the '50s and '60s he could rely on support from the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. Then two things happened. First, he ran out of novel marketing angles. Second, the foundations began losing their tolerance for studies with no short-term payoff. Miller's last big hunt for Ford money came in the early 1970s. He was interested in factors affecting voter turnout, and the program officer was concerned about low turnout among minorities. Seemed like a nice match. Miller stressed that the study would aim to identify barriers to minority turnout—which, he thought, might be the first step toward raising that turnout. Not good enough. Ford wanted to be assured that the study would spell out ways to increase minority turnout. Miller couldn't in good conscience promise such a thing. Ever since 1977 the National Election Studies project has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the largest—and an increasingly critical—supporter of basic social science.

Tip 5. Be a catalyst for change. Some people find it hard to promise with a straight face that they're going to hatch a solution to a major social problem. These people are best advised to become catalysts, bringing together lots of people who *can* promise solutions, or who at least might, if locked in a conference center together for days, emerge with a solution—or, at the *very* least, might emerge from the conference saying they had benefited from fresh perspectives. The foundations increasingly like the sorts of tangible signs of influence that conferences bring: people talking, people arguing, people drinking coffee. They especially like to assemble people who might otherwise never meet: academics and politicians; bureaucrats and elected officials; left-wing fanatics and right-wing fanatics. And remember: the foundation's program officer may get to go along on the trip, so be judicious in proposing the locale. The Rockefeller Foundation's Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, is said to be a good place to forge consensus on pressing world problems.

Even if a new consensus doesn't emerge from this alchemy, an edited volume of papers probably will. There is lots of cynicism among academics who don't get invited to conferences about the plethora of foundation-sponsored edited volumes. Sending fifty people to Italy seems like an expensive way to compile a bunch of articles that have already appeared, in essence, in academic journals. But these books do sometimes get read. Journalists and policy-makers are unlikely to have the last three years of *American Economic Review* on their desks, but they may well have a few volumes that distill information on a given topic into small, strong doses. And in recent years the importance of packaging has become clearer and clearer to foundations, and foundation-supported think tanks. The Heri-

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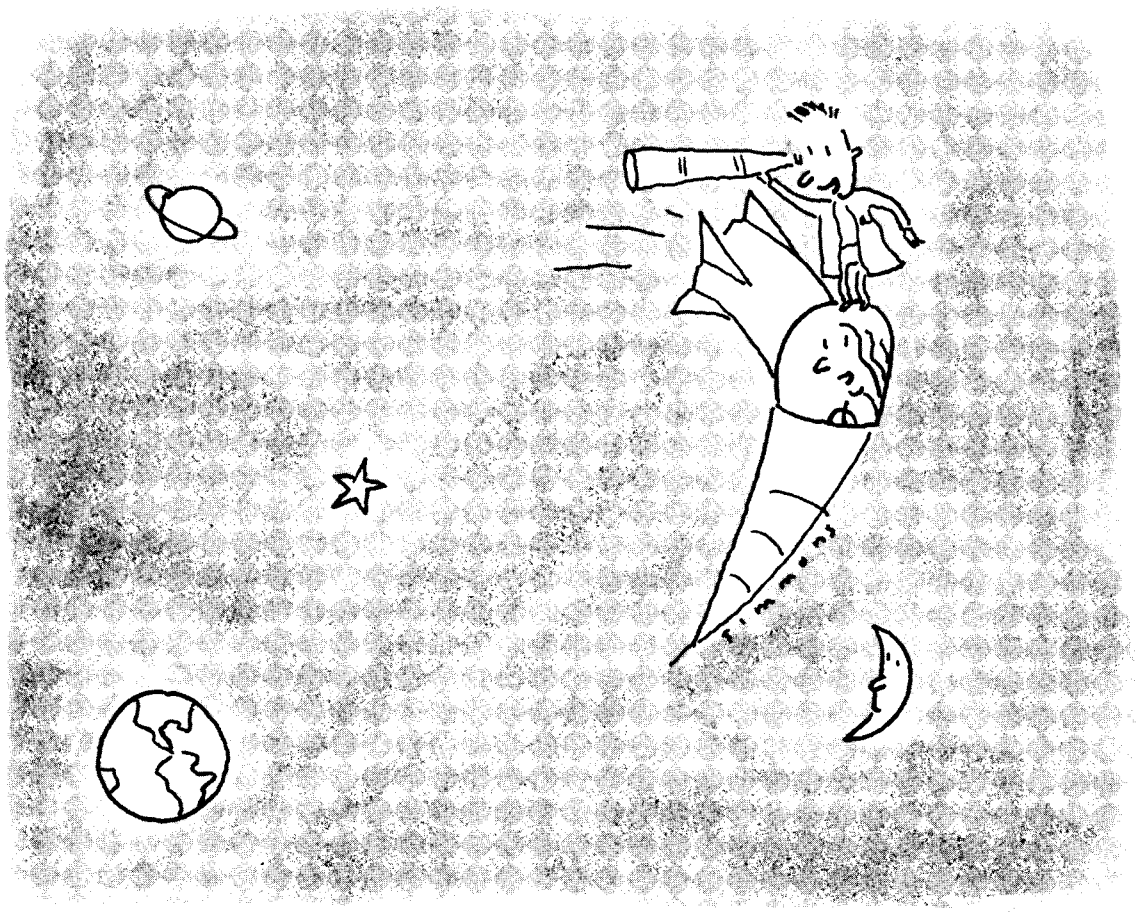

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tage Foundation, the think tank that has managed to become known as author of the Reagan agenda, spends more than a third of its budget on "marketing." Speaking of Heritage:

Tip 6. Subject tired liberal dogmas to withering re-examination. Beginning a couple of decades ago, there was an effort by a cluster of conservatives, among them Irving Kristol, to get more right-wing thinkers philanthropically subsidized. They considered it ironic that, though foundation endowments typically come from conservatively minded folk, the foundations often assume a left-of-center character under the direction of the "philanthropoids" (Dwight McDonald's phrase, coined in *The Ford Foundation*) who end up running them. Kristol and fellow conservatives did two things: (1) encouraged corporations to direct their philanthropy toward the exceptions to this rule, such as the John M. Olin Foundation; (2) encouraged the exceptions to exert influence more consciously on national policy-making.

The people at the center of this movement stress that it wasn't a right-wing conspiracy. "Nobody said, 'Let's create a climate in which we can elect a conservative president,' " recalls Leslie Lenkowsky, one of the co-conspirators. Lenkowsky, who ran the Smith-Richardson Foundation and is now running the Hudson Institute, says the idea wasn't to reward right-wing thinking per se so much as to reward alternatives to all the, well, left-wing thinking that was then getting rewarded. He and Kristol and others just felt there was "a whole host of issues that deserved to be examined." They just wondered, Lenkowsky recalls: "Who has interesting ideas?" Well, it turned out that the people with interesting ideas were people like Robert Bork, Martin Feldstein, Charles Murray, and Allan Bloom—who, thanks partly to the philanthropic support they got during the 1970s and/or early 1980s, need no introduction.

If you suggest to conservatives that Kristol et al. have turned the tide, so that right-wing money now holds sway in the world of ideas, you will be directed to a list of the largest philanthropic foundations. (In order of money given away annually as of 1988: Ford Foundation, $184 million; Pew Charitable Trusts, $136 million; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, $105 million; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, $104 million; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, $88 million; Lilly Endowment, $80 million; Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, $60 million; Rockefeller Foundation, $56 million; Kresge Foundation, $53 million; Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, $44 million.) You will be reminded that of the most often cited conservative foundations—Olin, Smith-Richardson, Lynde and Harry Bradley, Pew, Sarah Scaife—only Pew is on the list.

True enough. Further, it is true that the MacArthur Foundation, the most commonly cited example of woolly-minded '60s-era liberalism, does indeed deserve this distinction. (Its president, Adele Simmons, was recruited from the presidency of Hampshire College, that bastion of mellowness a.k.a. "The Frisbee School.") In fact, no area of study seems to escape MacArthur's touchy-feely tendencies. A few years ago the foundation gave $28,000 to Cambridge University for "Stephen Hawking's attempt to unify quantum theory and Einstein's Theory of Gravitation." Now, such a theory would be a bargain at twice the price. But how much money has MacArthur given to brilliant physicists who are pondering that problem and *aren't* tragically paralyzed by a relentless degenerative disease?

Still, leaving MacArthur aside, the big-name foundations aren't necessarily the founts of stereotypically liberal thought they're often made out to be. Granted, the Rockefeller Foundation is still willing to hand out the occasional $52,000 for a study of "Feminism and Moral Theory: a Prolegomenon to Ethics for Post-industrial Societies." But you can look through dozens of consecutive pages of Rockefeller's annual report without finding a readily ridiculed expenditure. As for the Ford Foundation: conservatives complain that its strong affirmative action policy (*Tip 7. Be black*) is a vestige of paleoliberalism. And certainly Ford writes more than its share of $50,000 checks to groups like Paraphrase, to "establish Black Heritage Trail on New York's Lower East Side." Still, "The Common Good," the big report on welfare Ford released in 1989, was hardly a litany of Great Society dogmas. It offered reasoned support (backed by a surprisingly broad big-name consensus) of a fairly harsh, if expensive, workfare program: jobs would be guaranteed, but everyone would be kicked off the welfare rolls after two years.

Besides, however many centrist and just-left-of-center foundations there may be, when it comes to public policy, conservative money gets more bang per buck. Just look at the think tanks, the main conduits between foundations and political discourse. Here is a list of the eight biggest tanks, along with thumbnail ideological profiles (the list, ranked by operating revenues, was compiled recently by R. Kent Weaver of the Brookings Institution, but the profiles have been added): The Rand Corporation (its main job is to provide straight-ahead research, on contract, to the Defense Department, though it has been accused of both left-wing and right-wing leanings); Brookings Institution (perhaps still a bit left of center, but barely); Heritage Foundation (solidly right, and proud of it); Hoover Institution (rabidly right, and proud of it); Urban Institute (another big government contractor, but for domestic policy studies, a job that some think gives it a left-of-center tilt); American Enterprise Institute (right of center but not dogmatic); Center for Strategic and International Studies (right of center); Hudson Institute (right). That's a pretty high batting average.

Moreover, conservative foundations have wisely avoided confining their financial support to conservative think tanks. As the Fords and Rockefellers have become less reliable sources of support for academic

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research—even the sort of applied but in-depth work done at the better think tanks—places like Brookings have looked to traditionally conservative foundations to fill the void. For example, Olin and Bradley subsidized a recent Brookings book by John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe advocating choice in public education. The book made a splash in the policy community—partly, no doubt, *because* it came out of Brookings yet supported a conservative idea.

Now, it probably is true that in the grand scheme of things, including foundation activity outside the Beltway, more money goes to mush-minded left-wingers than to reptilian right-wingers. Still, it's about time conservatives quit clinging to their cherished status as a persecuted minority.

Tip 8. Be a zeitgeist weather vane. Like everything else, widely subsidized subjects come and go. During the late 1970s in the field of international relations, for example, there was much talk about "North-South Dialogue" and "interdependence," and lots of money went toward thinking about Third World countries. Then came the Afghanistan invasion and Ronald Reagan and the Evil Empire speech. Suddenly the hot topic in international affairs wasn't global interdependence, but national security. This entailed much analysis of bipolar nuclear strategy, and, especially from non-conservative foundations, a slew of studies on how to keep the peace, ranging from good old-fashioned deterrence theory, with its aim of "enhancing stability," to warm, fuzzy ideas about sister cities. Now, with the cold war over, everyone is trying to find phrases that catch the attention of program officers.

Tip 9. Co-opt existing terminology. For starters, you might throw "multipolar" in there somewhere. Beyond that, the object of the game seems to be to hijack "national security," a hardy perennial, and steer it toward your area of expertise. The global-environmentally minded (who get big support from Rockefeller and MacArthur, in particular) are insisting that national security is now scarcely distinguishable from "planetary security." The more mainstream, dark-suit types are saying that no nation can be secure in the absence of a stable "European security structure." And economists in the industrial policy crowd, along with educators in the excellence-in-education crowd, have been making a sly bid for foreign-policy money, insisting that in the future national security will be defined in terms of economic competitiveness, not military strength. Saddam Hussein has become something of an irritant to these people. ("Persian Gulf Security Structure" may already be playing at a think tank near you. Also, you might substitute "unipolar" for "multipolar," though this could prove within weeks to have been a bad idea.) But Hussein has been a godsend for all the experts on multilateral arms control, who have been arguing for years that stopping the flow of sophisticated arms to tinhorn Third World dictators should become a global priority.

Actually, "all the experts on multilateral arms control" is a little misleading. Over the past few years this contingent has consisted of a few lonely people trying to attract grant money in a world that was showering dollars on nuclear strategy and bilateral arms control. Which raises a common complaint about philanthropy: the growing trend-consciousness of foundations and think tanks leaves society scantily prepared for new historical waves. James Allen Smith, author of the forthcoming book *The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite*, says the preoccupation with pressing policy concerns, along with waning faith in the value of basic social science research, has left us without a broad cadre of experts to be drawn upon as the need arises. It is all part of the emphasis on "marketing proposals and getting policy ideas into play," he says. "Books get shorter, they are written with punchier recommendations. Projects are conceived that will respond to issues on the policy agenda this year or next."

It's true. How many foundation-sponsored studies, during the long obsession with the cold war and nuclear peace, were devoted to figuring out just how dangerous a person Saddam Hussein is? How many asked how to transform a Stalinist economy into a free market economy? These are arguably the two most pressing problems facing the world at this moment, and it is safe to say that virtually none of the more than $50 billion spent by foundations between 1979 and 1989 went to illuminate them.

In principle, foundations could help fight the tyranny of orthodoxy that so many other social forces (notably human nature) favor. Probably the best strategy would be the MacArthur approach: find smart, offbeat people, give them money, and leave them alone. Only with this qualification: in contrast to the MacArthur approach, the criteria for selection should end after "smart" and "offbeat," rather than including "politically correct," and "the kind of person Bill Moyers would want to interview."

Tip 10. Examine the implications of tips one through nine. How worrisome you find the foundations' and think tanks' shortened time horizons depends on how much faith you put in long-term social science research. Similarly, whether you care that more and more funding for inquiry comes from the right rather than center (or center rather than left, if you prefer) depends on how you conceive of the relationship between money and thought. Has the ideological tenor of Brookings, for example, been influenced by its growing dependence on conservative foundations (and on corporate donors, who also have their share of conservative interests)? Certainly there's little doubt that Brookings has discernibly drifted from left toward center. Then again, so has just about everyone else. The question remains: Did the money drive the ideas, or did the ideas earn financial support by virtue of their merit and novelty? To answer such questions responsibly, you must first engage in some cosmic reflection on the nature of history, stopping in turn to consider Hegelian dialectics, Great Man Theories, etc. This is not the sort of enterprise that should be undertaken without substantial funding. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Lives, More or Less

"Honesty is always the best policy," said George Washington, but he wasn't speaking of art, where that policy sometimes falls short. **Avalon** (Tri-Star), written and directed by Barry Levinson, is honest, but it banks too much on its honesty.

Avalon is the name of a district in Baltimore, the city that was the setting of two previous Levinson films, *Diner* and *Tin Men*. His screenplay deals with a Jewish family of five brothers, their wives, and their descendants, from 1914 to the age of television. Presumably these people are either Levinson's family or people much like them. But he hasn't found the right answer to a fundamental question: These people are important to me; can I make them important to others?

The Krichinsky family saga is in a long line of comparable stories that goes back at least as far as Abraham Cahan's novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), stories of Jewish immigrants and what happens to them in America. Familiarity of subject is no bar in itself, or who would compose another love song? But Levinson, though he writes with affection and directs with sympathy, simply hasn't seen deeply enough into his people. Whatever they may mean to him, they come to us as stock characters in this milieu.

Chief among them is Sam Krichinsky, and the film starts with his arrival in America as a young man, in 1914—on July 4, in fact, complete with dazzling display. In Baltimore his four brothers, who had preceded him to America, welcome him. All work hard—Sam goes in for wallpapering—and all five play the violin at dances on weekends. Marriages, families, outings, family meetings, quarrels, reconciliations follow. (The biggest quarrel comes at one of the annual Thanksgiving get-togethers when Sam orders the turkey to be cut before the oldest brother, perennially late, gets there.) The tread of time is also measured by, of course, changes in automobiles, moves from Avalon to more spacious suburbs, the advent of TV, and the arrival of European relatives who survived the concentration camps—inevitably the most moving sequence.

Sam's son is Jules Kaye, who eventually shares center stage with him. Jules's cousin and business partner is Izzy Kirk. The two cousins prosper so much that they open a giant discount store, but it burns down on its opening day. (There's a telling twist about the cause of the fire, involving Jules's little son.) In the course of the years, members of the family die, and at the end Sam, with failing memory, is in a home for the elderly, being visited by his grandson and *his* son. The picture ends with a reprise of Sam's Fourth of July arrival.

Most of the acting is substantial. Sam is Armin Mueller-Stahl, who was seen recently as the Hungarian fascist immigrant in *The Music Box*. Mueller-Stahl, a highly experienced actor from what was once East Germany, has a keen sense of what his sturdy presence can do in itself, and he then adds only as much acting as is necessary. Sam's wife, the most prominent woman in the cast, is played diligently by Joan Plowright (Lady Olivier), but her Jewish accent and intonations slip occasionally. Jules is Aidan Quinn, who as a first-generation American has no foreign accent. Quinn has sufficient imagination to convey the requisite Jewishness by a kind of territorial osmosis, like a chameleon. Other roles are more conventionally cast. Leo Fuchs, once a light of the Yiddish theater, plays one of Sam's brothers. Lou Jacobi, overacting as usual, plays the oldest and most irate of the original five.

Levinson's directing has cunning touches. When Jules's little son runs to his grandfather's house to make what he thinks is a terrible confession, Levinson keeps the camera across the street as the old man and the boy converse on the front step (though we hear what it's about), thus seeming to keep the talk confidential. When Jules and Izzy are summoned to the fire in their store, the first we see of the blaze is in the reflections on their car windows. Levinson heightens the elegiac quality of the film from time to time by the way he treats sound, diminishing the "natural" sound of a scene while music plays, a device that floats the moment like a dream.

But very little of what the characters say and do in the picture is much more than what we would expect, and sometimes it's even below the level of expectation. *Avalon* has no story in the traditional sense; it's a chronicle, and as such it

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Dreams. *Eight episodes, all of them dreams that Akira Kurosawa has had. All of them have connections with his previous work, but only four of them are the master at his best. (Reviewed 10/8/90)* **The Icicle Thief.** *An Italian delight. Maurizio Nichetti, author-director-actor, bounces present-day color and 1950s black and white off each other, saying something about current comfiness and past rigors. (10/1/90)* **Life and Nothing But.** *Bertrand Tavernier, a superb director, once more writes a screenplay that doesn't quite succeed. Still, with the splendid Philippe Noiret in charge, this drama about the identification of missing World War I soldiers in 1920 has breadth and bite. (10/15/90)* **Postcards from the Edge.** *Mike Nichols, as always with a lightweight script, directs dazzlingly. Meryl Streep, as a Hollywood actress, and Shirley MacLaine, as her performer mother, shine in a comedy that needs all the light they give it. (10/8/90)* **—SK**

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depends for its interest on texture and nuance. These are what the screenplay lacks. Levinson has apparently told the truth, but he hasn't been able to make the familiar strange.

Two monstrosities are currently on view, both adapted from the work of well-known writers. **Henry and June** (Universal) is drawn from the diaries of Anaïs Nin and some novels by Henry Miller. It apparently wanted to be a rhapsody of erotic liberation—Paris in 1931, and all that. (Under the credits we hear "Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune.' ") Shock was perhaps intended, but the only shock is that a director as dryly witty as Philip Kaufman showed himself to be in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* failed to see the silliness in much of this film.

Nin is living in Paris with her husband, Hugo, when Miller arrives with his wife, June. They meet, and varied boudoir encounters follow—Hugo and Nin, Miller and Nin, June and Nin. When the film doesn't show Nin and Miller writhing, it shows them writing. Neither of these private acts is especially photogenic—as handled here, anyway. The picture seems to carry that post-Isadora Duncan blazon: Sex isn't Dirty, it's Beautiful.

Uma Thurman, as the flat-accented June, has more eroticism in her person than the film has in general. Richard E. Grant, so scintillating in the English films *Withnail and I* and *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*, struggles with the dumb role of Hugo. Fred Ward, as Miller, is that sad spectacle, a minor actor in a major part. But if the picture had been able to make some headway, it would have been wrecked anyway by Maria de Medeiros as Nin. The crux of the film is the *éducation sentimentale* of Nin, and de Medeiros has the emotional profundities of a limp leaf.

Worse, even, is **Tune in Tomorrow ...** (Cinecom). For this mess, Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* has been transported from Lima to New Orleans (allowing for an unexplained prelude in Detroit) and has also been otherwise altered.

Keanu Reeves is a young newswriter at a radio station, c. 1951. He falls in love with his newly arrived and worldly aunt, Barbara Hershey—actually his father's brother's wife's sister. Both of these parts are unbelievably played, so the romance between them is especially unbelievable. Their lives are even less believably maneuvered by Peter Falk, the station's soap-opera writer, who gives this purported comedy its few amusing moments.

The director was Jon Amiel. Not long ago he made an impression with his directing of the British TV serial *The Singing Detective*. But the only scenes in this film that seem to be by the same man are the ones of interplay between the actors of the soap opera in the studio and a fantasized realization of that soap story in real settings. Basically the whole film is just a couple of sorry jokes—the May-September romance, the semi-crazed manipulating scriptwriter meddling with that romance—agonizingly protracted. •

From Winchell to Page Six, gossip and democracy.

Confidence Games

By Nicholas Lemann

"But tell me why it is that everybody is so good-looking now. In the fifties there were the really good-looking people and then all the rest who weren't. Today, everybody is at least attractive. How did it happen?"
—*The Andy Warhol Diaries*, August 5, 1982

One of the great canards about American society today is that it has just recently become excessively preoccupied with gossip. "Our pervasive celebrity culture, fueled by a smarmy sort of New Journalism, has made Liz Smith, 'Page Six,' and Suzy more important to the identity and future of the *Daily News* and *The New York Post* than a dozen Pulitzer Prize winners,"

Walter Winchell: A Novel
by Michael Herr
(Knopf, 158 pp., $18.95)

Carl Bernstein wrote huffily in *Time* last March, just after the Trump separation. A wave of this sort of comment seems to break every few years, usually following some especially unbridled orgy of gossip in the press. In fact, roughly since the early 1970s, when *People* became the magazine industry's greatest commercial success in a generation, the clucking about the importance of gossip has been fairly continuous. It belongs (with the received opinions about sexual mores, substance abuse, business ethics, and other subjects) on the list of examples of our tendency to congratulate ourselves by proclaiming our problems to be much worse in the present than they were in the past.

More than half a century ago, in a famous hatchet job on Walter Winchell in *The New Yorker*, St. Clair McKelway wrote, "Gossip-writing is at present like a spirochete in the body of journalism." McKelway's warning was probably more justified than those of today's gossip-haters. When he was writing, the newspaper gossip column was still a new institution (dating from about 1925, he believed, not entirely correctly), so it was natural to wonder where it would all lead.

Moreover, Winchell, the leading gossip of the day, was vastly more influential and pernicious than anyone around now. During his peak, which came during and just after World War II, his column appeared in about a thousand papers, six days a week, and his weekly radio broadcast had 21 million listeners; William A. Henry III has estimated that he reached "almost 90 percent of the adult U.S. population." By contrast, Liz Smith, today's gossip queen, is syndicated in sixty papers and appears on a local television show in New York. Winchell was granted personal audiences with Franklin Roosevelt (whose praises he sang constantly in his column), thought nothing of dashing off a letter of diplomatic advice to Neville Chamberlain (and then claiming that it had been acted upon), and was in constant touch with J. Edgar Hoover. It's inconceivable that Smith would be courted by national politicians—and Smith is famously nice and presentable, whereas Winchell was a sixth-grade dropout who consorted with gangsters, bragged in his column about his sexual conquests, habitually checked the coin return slots of pay phones for spare nickels, and carried two loaded pistols whenever he went out.

In a symposium on gossip in *Harper's* in 1986—based, naturally, on the premise that it has recently taken on a new and excessive role in the United States—Lewis Lapham asked Liz Smith to tell him what kinds of gossip she wouldn't print. "Gossip about who's on drugs, about who's gay, about who's cheating on whom," she replied. All of these (if you substitute excessive drinking for drugs) were stock-in-trade for Winchell,

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who delighted in accusing people of being "fairies" and in reporting that some married person had been spotted on a dance floor with a person other than his or her spouse. What was remarkable about Winchell's meanness was not only that it gave him a special kind of power that no gossip today possesses—the power regularly to ruin people—but that he could get away with it. Smith frequently makes the point in interviews that if you want to survive in New York, you can't afford to make enemies. Winchell ruled Gotham for the better part of three decades while making enemies daily.

Once you get beyond the rush of Spenglerian sentiments about the pass we've come to when a rejected screenplay can be published as a novel, Michael Herr's *Walter Winchell* is a wonderful reintroduction to what might be called the gossip baseline, against which we can measure the condition of gossip today. In case the screenplay-as-novel is going to become a genre of contemporary fiction, the main lesson about it seems to be that it's very good (in Herr's hands, at least) at conveying surface—atmosphere and people's public personae—but it's not so good at plumbing the depths. Herr has a lot of fun with the snappy Broadway patter of Winchell and his friends. He captures Winchell's almost wild energy and his pure, superego-free ambition; and he takes us through all the main events of Winchell's life in a headlong rush that gives the book the feel of a very long movie montage sequence, rather than a real exploration of character or situation.

Winchell (né Winchel) was born in 1897 and raised in a part of Harlem that was still Jewish. His parents were poor and quarreled horribly until they divorced; in the course of the vagaries of their marriage, the children sometimes lived as boarders in the tenement apartments of strangers. At the age of 12, Winchell went on the road as a vaudevillian. He tried a variety of comedy and song-and-dance routines (the last one was a partnership with his first wife), but he didn't have the talent to get more than a bare toehold in the low-rent sector of show business. He found his métier when he began writing up sheets of gossip about the people he knew in the business and posting them on backstage bulletin boards. He went pro by taking a job with the *Vaudeville News*, then moved to the notorious *Evening Graphic* (home of the "cosmopograph," or composite news photograph, which depicted events that hadn't actually happened), and then, in 1929, he went to work for William Randolph Hearst's New York *Daily Mirror*, which was his base for most of his career.

WALTER WINCHELL BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The crucial professional association of Winchell's career was not with a paper, however, but with Sherman Billingsley, the Oklahoma-bred bootlegger who owned the Stork Club. All through the 1930s and 1940s the elegant Stork was New York's reigning nightclub, and Winchell spent the better part of every working day (meaning, in his case, from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.) seated at Table 50, a notepad and telephone at his side, kowtowed to by waiters, press agents, aspiring actresses, socialites, gangsters, writers, and politicians. When he left the club he would cruise the streets, listening to the police radio in his car, stop in at another nightspot or two, and then return to his apartment on Central Park West to write his column at daybreak. (His second wife and his children were ensconced in Scarsdale.)

During the worst years of the Depression, Winchell made more than $350,000 a year. His most famous adventures included his hysterical coverage of the Lindbergh kidnapping trial, his delivery of the gangster Louis "Lepke" Buchalter into the hands of Hoover, his brief self-imposed exile to Florida when he thought the mob was going to kill him, his hammering attacks on Adolf Hitler (often delivered in the form of imputations of homosexuality), his receipt of a Stutz Bearcat from the notorious criminal kingpin Owney Madden, and his many, many one-night stands with showgirls. A score of Winchell slogans and catchphrases were part of the American language (if a married couple were "Renovating," for example, they were getting a Nevada divorce).

To reread Winchell columns today is to be amazed by the quality of his prose and the breadth of his interests. He certainly wasn't a writer of enough stature to be worth reading now for anything but historical reasons, but he was without question more interested in the use of language than any present-day gossip columnist, and also in touch with a much larger slice of his society. An excerpt cobbled together from various columns in the 1940s will convey some of the flavor:

> *Bigtown Boogie-Woogie*: Mornings cushioned with velvety winds made by angels.... Hoity-toity first-nighters entering theaters in a blaze of mink accompanied by the sizzle of silk.... Pretty girls waving their wile-power in the joints, while stares nibble at their charms.... The secluded corners of nightclubs—the chatter box pews of columnists.... The hiccuping of hips during the rhumba sessions in the Latin places.... Full-blown dowagers waddling into swanky cafes like glaciers and inspecting themselves in the large mirrors, which gives them the truthache.... Torch-carriers draped around the bars, suffering from blonde poisoning.... *Next*

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to the war, the problems of the nation's "Harlems" are uppermost in the president's mind. And some of the Washington big guns, who consider it a small problem, will soon find it one of their own largest headaches. . . . Ginger Rogers and ma are reported tiffing. Ginger wants ma to stay outta political oggermints. Mama no wanna. . . . They say the latest tiff at the White House is between John Steelman and Truman top aide Clark Clifford. . . . A well-known swish was just put in 4-F . . . "What's the matter with him?" we asked. . . . "I dunno," replied Georgie Price, "prob'ly went for a stroll and threw his hip out of place." . . . Several groups of Negro slaves rebelled against their owners long before the Civil War exploded. . . . Some of the soft-headed "liberals" who serve as apologists for Russia should be reminded of this fact: Before a Russian can become a member of the Communist Party he must vow to shun all other faiths, including Christianity. And he must put aside such "heresies" as liberalism. . . . *Sights You Never See from a Sight-Seeing Bus*: Gagwriters who congregate in front of Lindy's in the wee hours, tossing tired punchlines at each other. . . . Professional dancing duos that gather in Hanson's drug store every afternoon to rap each other's acts. . . . The tout who prides himself on having the gambling fraternity's oddest name: Rat-nose.

It was probably inevitable that Winchell would fall. When he did fall, it was so slow, excruciating, and complete as to have surely provided the legions who hated him with full satisfaction. Winchell's ability to command an audience evidently depended on his being invisible; as he had failed in vaudeville, he failed in television, while his archrival, Ed Sullivan of the *Daily News*, became a big star. After FDR died, the doors of the White House were no longer open to him. He fell in with David Schine, Roy Cohn, and Joe McCarthy. One night in 1951, Billingsley refused to seat Josephine Baker in the Stork Club, and Winchell, previously a cheerleader for Negro entertainers, took Billingsley's side and began Red-baiting Baker. Barry Gray, a radio host who put Baker's story on the air, was viciously attacked in Winchell's column, and beaten by thugs. So was Lyle Stuart, now a sleazy publisher, then editor of the anti-Winchell *Exposé* magazine. (For all that, just five years later Winchell and Billingsley had a terminal falling-out over Billingsley's having fired a cigarette girl whom Winchell liked.) *The New York Post* printed a scathing serialized exposé of Winchell. The number of papers carrying his column began to drop.

Winchell's marriage settled into the status of an armed truce. His wife became an alcoholic. His older daughter died at the age of six. His next daughter, Walda, went through ugly fights with Winchell over her romantic life. (This provided the plot for the anti-Winchell movie *Sweet Smell of Success*, with a screenplay co-authored by Clifford Odets.) The *Daily Mirror* folded in 1963. Winchell moved to the New York *Journal American*, which also folded in short order, and then to the *World Journal Tribune*, which ditto. His only son, Walter Jr., committed suicide on Christmas Day, 1967, after a short, disastrous life whose last stop was the welfare rolls in a small town in California. Just before Walter Jr.'s death, Winchell took out a full-page ad in *Variety*, which said, in part, "I miss seeing my byline in New York City where it appeared since 1920. . . . Never claimed being a newspaperman, Mr. Editor. Always called myself a newsboy. Peddling papers." Nobody bit. He stopped writing the column, moved to Arizona, and died there in 1971.

Most of what was written about Winchell during his lifetime (other than material written for publicity and ass-kissing purposes) was extremely negative. Safely dead, WW is easier to like. Herr readily admits that his subject was a "journalistic demagogue," but he has a soft spot for him. What seems to attract him to Winchell is the presence of traits that we all have begun to regard nostalgically, now

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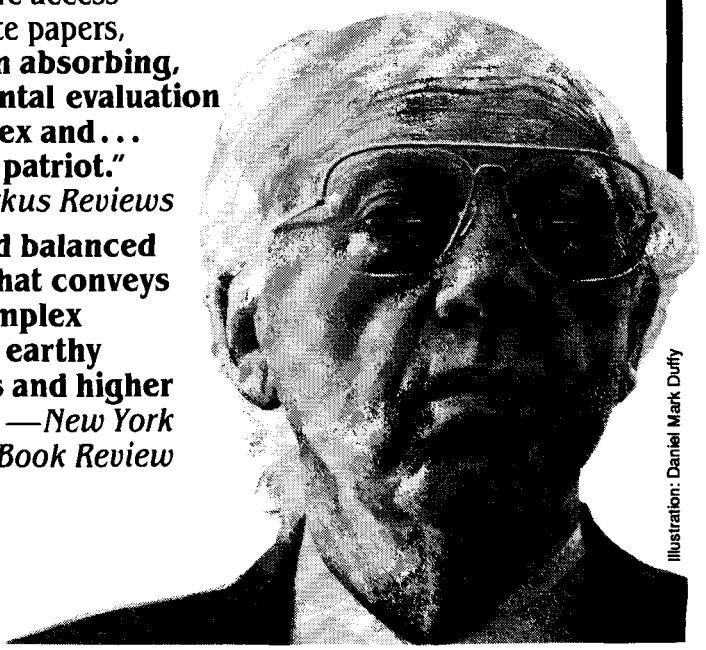

Illustration: Daniel Mark Duffy

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that they've disappeared from the national scene: Winchell's churning restlessness, his aura of the white slums, his complete lack of embarrassment or guilt, his unbridled will to power for both self and country. Affection for Winchell may be what led Herr to leave out, alone of all the main events of his subject's life, the suicide of Walter Jr., which would have made the old man look defeated and pathetic in the end. The last glimpse of Winchell that Herr gives us is the old man raising an American flag: "Walter stands at attention, grabs his balls, and salutes."

Another reason, obviously, that Herr was drawn to Winchell as a subject is that he was present at the creation of American popular culture as we now find it. As Herr says in his introduction, "If people go around today treating themselves like celebrities because not to be a celebrity is just too awful, we may have Walter Winchell to thank." Merely a glance at Winchell allows us to dispense with the only thought about gossip that anyone seems to have these days—namely, that it's a new development—and then proceed to figure out what the actual changes in gossip over the years have been, and what they mean.

Gossip, for our purposes, means published or broadcast gossip, as opposed to across-the-back-fence talk, which presumably has always gone on and will always go on without altering society much. Gossip serves as a connector between a large audience and a small group of people deemed interesting (that is, possessing high status), who are the ones being gossiped about. There is a certain age-old breed of journalism that deals in small-town-style innocuous chit-chat: Mary Sue Brown was named Homecoming Queen, and so on. This is proto-gossip, because its subjects don't have enough status to make them interesting to a large audience. During most of the nineteenth century, this country certainly had a high-status class, but its members evidently had no interest in seeing their social doings chronicled in print, and the public may not have been interested in reading about them anyway. True gossip requires a marriage of status and publicity.

The outlines of the modern gossip state begin to become discernible in the Gilded Age. During the two decades after the end of the Civil War, a large class of very rich people emerged. Because their wealth had come from industrial capitalism, which itself was new, their status lagged behind their money and power. They lacked the traditional Western European indices of prestige, such as feudal land holdings, titles of nobility, and positions of power in the clergy, the military, and government. At the same time, a rudimentary national marketplace was forming thanks to such institutions as the railroad, the telegraph, the telephone, the big-circulation urban daily newspaper, and the early book and magazine publishing companies.

It was in this climate that the invention of Society, which supplanted Aristocracy as the best working name for the class of Americans at the narrow pinnacle of the status pyramid, took place. (I'm borrowing this terminology from Cleveland Amory, whose *Who Killed Society?* is the best history of these matters.) The newly rich of the late nineteenth century, who were the core group in Society, put on a multifaceted full-court press to bring their status up to the level of their wealth. They built grand homes, they made philanthropic gifts, they married propitiously, they entertained, they collected art—and they sought newspaper and magazine publicity for themselves. It won't do to say that Society was prelapsarian as far as gossip is concerned; remember that the event that defined Society was the publication by *The New York Times* in 1892 of social arbiter Ward McAllister's list of "the Four Hundred," who were the guests at a memorable ball given by Mrs. William W. Astor, and therefore together constituted "*la crème de la crème.*"

Virtually everyone in the Four Hundred was rich, and virtually all the heads of household on the list were in business. Probably it was precisely their money, and the lavish way of life it bought, that made them interesting to the newspaper-reading public, which apparently defined its own fervent aspirations for success in big-dollar terms. (It is true that within Society, being from an old family—that is, a family that was affluent or prominent before the Civil War—also conferred status, but it's doubtful that the ordinary people who liked reading about Society cared about people's bloodlines anywhere near as much as Society itself did.) Today, in most American cities, the concept of Society is still alive and well, and the newspaper gossip columnist is mainly a society columnist, reporting fanglessly on the doings of the local burghers. Even New York City harbors society columnists, such as Suzy in the *Post*, though the suspicion arises that her subjects merit space not because readers are interested in them, but because they are influential in the circles in which newspaper editors and publishers travel.

At the level of national-audience gossip, however, the concept of Society underwent a mutation in the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1919, as Amory reminds us, Cholly Knickerbocker of the Hearst papers coined the phrase "Café Society" to memorialize the change. The eponymous difference between Café Society and Society is the venue—public places rather than private mansions, which were doomed by the institution of the income tax. Another difference is that the membership rolls were broadened to include people other than just rich businessmen. In the Cholly Knickerbocker days, most of the members of Café Society had names like Belmont, Biddle, Putnam, Vanderbilt, and Widener, but over the years the cast at the café evolved into what it was in Winchell's day: a mix of the rich, the talented, the good-looking, and the members of that peculiar class of people who semi-professionally hang around restaurants and nightclubs (as McKelway put it, with a heavy sigh, "Barbers, gangsters, gossip-writers, political cynicism, café society").

On the demand side of gossip, the development of Café Society demonstrated that, as the United States was beginning to create a formal meritocracy and a media culture, the definition of status was broadening to include claims other than money, such as achievement (especially in the arts) and fame. On the supply side, something more complicated was going on. The industrial rich may have originally consented to publicity of the Ward McAllister variety merely as a part of a broad strategic campaign to legitimize themselves, but they seem to have discovered quickly that being favorably written up in the papers is fun: a worthy end in itself. Throughout this century, there has been an abundant supply of rich people who have maintained relations with the gossip business mainly because they've come to enjoy the ego-flush that comes from seeing their names in print. Surely this explains why society queens like Pat Buckley and Brooke Astor so often invite the press to their parties, although the official excuse is that they're trying to publicize their favorite charities. Even tycoons (at least in New York and Los Angeles) now apparently feel that they haven't truly made it if they're rich but not famous. Donald Trump represents a final twist: he became world famous as a tycoon without actually being one, and then was able to secure bank credit on the basis of his fame rather

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than his financial condition.

Many of those being gossiped about, though, have a direct and unsubtle pecuniary interest in it. The growth of Café Society coincided with the establishment of the vaudeville circuit, and then of radio and the movies. In order to survive and prosper, the entertainment industry needed constant publicity, and gossip columns were one of the best places to get it. A good columnist is a mediating presence between the industry and the public—someone who knows which aspects of studio promotional material most people will find interesting, and who can create a sense of drama around certain entertainers that will help them become stars and thereby make more money for the studios. For all their vaunted power, Winchell's best-known fellow "three-dotters," the Hollywood columnists Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, really performed the function of superpublicists for the studios. Winchell himself was besieged by press agents only because there was, suddenly, an economic support system for them. Herr alludes to this by having Damon Runyon tell Winchell, in the mid-1920s, "You could never have gotten away with this ten years ago. Before the war, you would have starved."

What is most striking about the structure of gossip today is how little it has changed over the course of nearly three-quarters of a century. Today, as always, the nightclub (or the glamorous restaurant) is gossip's central institution—the place most conducive to an easy mix of the two main categories of the gossiped-about, and to a sense of social excitement. As always, when a nightclub is hot, there is a long line of people waiting to get in, though certain people are quickly waved past the velvet rope (among them gossip columnists, who made the club hot in the first place). From Elsa Maxwell through William Norwich, the gossip columnist has been an oddly constant personage, usually by background completely unlikely as a social arbiter and by current life circumstance a tears-of-the-clown type. Most of them have been single or unhappily married, and, for all the time they spend at social events, they are curiously lacking in real social attachments: they are the kind of people for whom Thanksgiving is the loneliest day of the year.

There are still eager publicists, still fresh-minted zillionaires seeking semi-respectable fame through the columns, still starlets and famous writers and club owners you wouldn't bring home to Mom. (Steve Rubell of Studio 54 and the Palladium, who was the Sherman Billingsley of the modern age, like Billingsley had his trouble with the law, though in Rubell's case the stretch in prison came after the arrival of fame and fortune, not before.) But there have been changes. The most obviously important is the invention of television. Like the new communications media that came before it, television strongly affected the world of gossip—first, and not least, by dethroning Walter Winchell. Television plays a dual role, as a purveyor in its own right and as a generator of famous people for others to gossip about. For some reason it has never been very good at the first of these roles; various network gossips have come and gone, none of them catching on, although more journalistic gossip shows like "Entertainment Tonight" and "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" seem to have more vitality. At the second role, it has been tremendously influential. If the most gossiped about personalities could be determined by quantitative analysis, surely the results would put TV stars (including news anchors) in first place. They are well known to be the best-selling cover subjects of *People*; the whole magazine is, as Tom Wolfe once wrote, "a print annex to the TV set," and that's one reason for its success.

Television also economically reordered the universe of magazines and newspapers, and that changed the nature of gossip too. Second- and third-tier city daily papers have died off, thanks in large part to television's having stolen their readers and their advertisers. As a result, the phenomenon of the crosstown gossip-columnist rivalry has pretty much disappeared everywhere but New York. A monopoly gossip columnist, like a monopoly newspaper, will naturally move away from combativeness and controversiality and toward an inoffensive respectability. For magazines, the effect of television has been to render obsolete the schmaltzy, big-hearted national mass weeklies such as the old *Life* and *Look*, and to force the survivors into the business of "narrow-casting" to audiences too specialized for advertisers to reach profitably through television.

As the magazine audience has become more segmented, so has magazine gossip. *The National Enquirer*, *The Star*, and the other supermarket tabloids survive by giving advertisers the opportunity to target an audience more "down-market" than that of network television, and editorially they serve up gossip much more sleazy and fantastic than Winchell produced. At the other end of the spectrum, upscale magazines can publish gossip about subjects of interest only to upper-middle-class people in confined geographical areas, such as the openings and closings of restaurants, the movements of artists from gallery to gallery, real estate transactions on Martha's Vineyard, the magnitude of authors' book advances, and the jockeying for berths in the sub-Cabinet. Even Liz Smith and Page Six print a lot of this kind of material, which reinforces the casual impression that the swells of New York do read the tabloids, but only for the gossip columns.

The other important change in gossip since the Winchell era is harder to get at. But it can be adduced pretty clearly, by examining a series of unmistakable clues. The first clue is who has been added to the list of the gossiped-about. Entertainers and the rich still predominate, of course, but the growth category since the 1960s has been what used to be known as "the trade." In the days when Society was born, a century ago, the trade consisted of people who performed specialized, high-order services for the rich—hairdressers, dressmakers, jewelers, portraitists, interior decorators, art dealers, architects, and after-dinner entertainers. Service-providers-to-the-rich who dealt with money per se, such as lawyers and bankers, were usually the social equals of their clients; members of the trade seldom were, and many of them weren't allowed to enter the mansion by the front door.

Since about the mid-1970s, members of the trade have been a constant presence in the gossip columns, where they are now treated as the equals or even the superiors of the their customers. The pioneers here were Halston, in those days a milliner, Kenneth, the hairdresser, and Oleg Cassini, the clothing designer (whose brother Igor was a gossip columnist). All three became well known in the early 1960s because of their connection to Jacqueline Kennedy, whom they served in traditional manner. But for all of them that was just a step on the way to the real goal, which was being retail entrepreneurs seeking the business of the middle class. Therefore they stood to benefit greatly from any publicity the gossip columnists gave them.

Halston was the central figure in the loose group of celebrities who hung around at Studio 54, the Stork Club of the 1970s; for years it was possible for the good God-fearing American citizenry to follow his activities on a daily (or more accurately, nightly) basis, simply by reading the gossip columns. He went into eclipse and then died, but other fashion designers, such as Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Bill Blass, and Oscar de la Renta, have become among the most prominent and enduring gossip subjects,

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and along the way have gotten as rich as the people they used to serve. Andy Warhol, another gossip-column perennial of the 1970s and 1980s, can be seen as a society portraitist who joined Society (and then started his own gossip magazine, *Interview*); like the dress designers, his social status, his celebrity, and his net worth all rose in perfect lockstep.

The second clue is a shift in the character of the nightclubs that have occupied the epicenter of the gossip culture. Herr describes the crowd at the Stork Club in this way: "Everybody is beautifully, expensively dressed. Even the military uniforms seem tailored." Those members of the clientele who weren't wealthy and sophisticated at least felt it incumbent on them to try to look the part. At Studio 54, on the other hand, the waiters were dressed in satin gym shorts only, and the effect the whole crowd was striving for was one of sexual attractiveness, proficiency, and availability. The successor nightclubs of the mid-1980s, such as Area and Palladium, which were all south of midtown, had essentially the same ambience, as is made clear by Michael Musto, a gossip columnist for *The Village Voice*, in this passage from his 1985 book *Downtown*:

> Somehow the ladies' room has evolved into the best room in practically every club, where people go to escape the loud music and just let it hang. Hardly anybody is a lady in here, even if they're female, and no one really cares. The point is to let loose with more abandon than would be advisable in the more out-in-the-open areas of the club. Then wash yourself off in the sink. Look into the stalls and you'll see dozens of happy feet attached to the gremlins who are trick-or-treating for nose candy or doing Ecstasy and hoping it will live up to its name. . . .

In the interest of accuracy, it should be pointed out that in this era, as opposed to the Studio 54 days, there was another element in the ambience of the nightclubs besides pure decadence: the aspirations of a certain breed of non-garret-inclined young artists and musicians (Madonna, Keith Haring) were being acted out on the premises. Here is Musto again, writing about a club called Danceteria:

> Karen Finley, a performance artist, sometimes intones an absurdly funny pornographic tone poem that goes, "And we sniffed all the Rolaids . . . and I wanted her . . . and I shoved my fist up her . . . and she had her period." That's a crowd pleaser.

It's true that the nightclub scene has changed again since the long-ago days of the mid-1980s. After AIDS and Reaganism hit New York, there was a vogue for stuffy, exclusive nightclubs like M.K. and Nell's and the Grolier Club. More recently, Café Society has taken up residence at elaborately casual downtown restaurants, like 150 Wooster (last year's model) and Tribeca Bar and Grill (this year's model). At the same time, big, loud, trendy nightclubs (Red Zone, Mars) continue to thrive, and for all these spots, the life cycle is much, much shorter than it was for nightclubs in Winchell's day. Overall, the point is that before 1960 the nightclubs used to purvey the style of turn-of-the-century Society, so that their customers might come as close as possible to feeling that they were guests at a debutante party at Pierre Lorillard's estate in Tuxedo Park in 1904. Even Owney Madden, when out in the evenings, customarily wore a dinner jacket. Since 1960 the clubs have instead purveyed styles drawn from life of the lower and middle classes—that is, either sweaty, vital vice-district physicality, or sleek victoriousness in the artistic and professional meritocracies.

The third clue is the growth of gossip designed to demonstrate the fallibility of the people being gossiped about. In Winchell's day, most gossip was intended to make its subjects seem financially, socially, and sexually larger-than-life (when he went on the attack, it was in the spirit of the kid throwing a spitball at the teacher—the fun came from readers' knowing that the target occupied an exalted rank, beyond the reach of empathy); not coincidentally, most movies tried to create the same effect for their stars. The kind of nasty gossip that used to ruin Hollywood careers and no longer does (Ingrid Bergman's out-of-wedlock pregnancy, Robert Mitchum's marijuana bust) only served to reinforce a code under which gossip subjects were presumed to be free of the normal run of human imperfections. Today, by contrast, the gossip press, especially *People*, is full of stories about celebrities' bouts with depression, addiction, divorce, recently unearthed childhood trauma, and so on. All of this is told to us with the obvious calculation that it will help, not hurt, the subjects' careers (which often involve playing average middle-class people on TV and in movies).

All these clues are evidence of a single phenomenon: the democratization of American society since World War II. The psychological gap between gossip subjects and gossip consumers has closed: we want to be like them in matters of style and taste (Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein have stores in the mall, so that everybody can wear the designers that the ladies in the columns wear), and we want them to be like us in sharing the heartbreaks of everyday life. The nightclub denizens we read about in the gos-

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sip columns aren't any longer people we think of as our betters—they're what we would be ourselves, if only we could lose fifteen pounds and get a promotion. Walter Winchell, king of the old order, was a creature of a structured, pyramidal society with a universal code of conduct, in which most people thought of themselves as just folks but admired those who weren't. Today's gossips reflect a fragmented, individualistic society in which everybody is, in his or her own self-image, simultaneously a victim and a star.

Even the much-maligned apotheosis of the new plutocrats of the 1980s, such as Saul Steinberg, Henry Kravis, and Ronald Perelman, are in a way evidence of the democratization of gossip: all these men have a regular-guy quality their forebears lacked, in the sense that they do not command vast empires and have not bothered to get for themselves the more difficult to attain forms of social prestige, such as links to the aristocracy. All their wives are women with no previous social credentials; they themselves are merely schlemiels who have gotten very rich at the casino.

Probably the best illustration in the change in gossip is the career of the Kennedy family—as subjects of gossip, not as politicians. Joseph P. Kennedy got rich and then crafted a conservative, distant public persona for himself: ambassador to the Court of St. James's, eldest daughter married to a member of the British nobility. John F. Kennedy, in his younger days, belonged to Café Society (he used to go to the Stork Club) and had a raffish mix of social friends. As president, Kennedy and his wife were the stylistic model for the new socially ambitious middle class. Their way of dressing and entertaining was widely copied in a way that, say, the Franklin Roosevelts' was not; people liked Eleanor and Franklin without wanting to be like them. And since the assassination, the family has mostly provided gossip that proves to us, again and again, that Kennedys regularly make the same mess of things that most of the rest of us do.

An argument can be made, ex post facto, for the social utility of Winchellism (in its time, of course, it was inexcusable): it simultaneously provided America with social cohesion, in the form of a shared interest in the goings-on at the Stork Club, and with a bizarre ethical creed, in the form of Winchell's prejudices. It was just the thing, in other words, for conquering the Depression and winning the war. It's impossible to see, by contrast, how the ethos of contemporary gossip is going to do us any good, unless you believe that even more emphasis on being attractive, well-dressed, and psychologically aware is the key to our competing successfully with the Japanese. There is also a risk that gossip may become boring as the subject-audience gap continues to narrow. The recent divorce of Tom Cruise, America's leading matinee idol, was covered in the sorrowful, opaque, all-forgiving tone that middle-aged parents use when describing their children's marital troubles. Kitty Dukakis's memoirs have failed to ignite a spark in part because she comes across as being indistinguishable from one's old roommate who's become a basket case. And how interesting are Donald Trump and Marla Maples, now that he's broke and she's out of hiding?

Gossip-obsession is an appurtenance of a striving, socially unified society—just the kind of place the American opinion-making classes feel that our country used to be, and is no longer. As the United States becomes more segmented, as technological innovations like the integrated circuit cause us to decentralize, as the middle classes obtain for themselves the glamorous, turbulent lives of the rich and famous, there is a real danger that gossip as we know it could begin to wither away. We could return to the *status quo ante*-Society, in which nobody's personal life was considered to be nationally riveting. Gossip is more an effect of social structure than a cause; it's worth watching as a barometer of our aspirations. An increase in gossip signifies a rising identification of success with the unruly public realm, and a decrease means a shifting of ambitions into private life. The truth is that the proper time to become alarmed about the role of gossip in journalism and American society is when there starts to be less of it. •

Unsacred History

BY TERENCE EMMONS

The Russian Revolution by Richard Pipes

(Knopf, 944 pp., $40)

If, as François Furet claimed in his classic essay, "la Révolution française est terminée," opinions about the French Revolution are at last, after two centuries, no longer intimately entangled with present-day French politics, the same most certainly cannot be said about the Russian Revolution of seventy-three years ago and about politics in what is left of the Soviet Union today. In the last few years, in fact, the history of the Russian Revolution has acquired a political significance that it never had before.

From the very beginning, the Bolshevik regime installed a rigid censorship, expunged all non-Bolshevik points of view, and cultivated an extreme ideological form of Whiggism regarding the Revolution, which was, of course, the regime's myth of creation, its source of legitimacy. Generations of Soviet historians have proclaimed the Revolution to have been not only glorious, but "necessary and inevitable," a postulate befitting a regime that made a state religion of the Laws of History.

Neither the intra-Party debates of the 1920s nor Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign (which he cut short for fear of undermining the legitimacy of the Party's rule) touched the creation myth, and Khrushchev's successors let the whole subject of historical revisionism lie like the proverbial sleeping dog. In reawakening the dog in the 1980s, Gorbachev and company picked up where Khrushchev left off, with revelations about the Stalin period and rehabilitations of Old Bolsheviks. But they intended, almost certainly, to do no more than clear the way to a view of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s as the launching pad for a market-socialist development that was, they insisted, an alternative *within* the "legacy of October" to Stalin's "command-administrative system." They never questioned whether "choosing the socialist option" (as Gorbachev likes to put it) in October 1917 really was the progressive thing to do.

The worst fears of those who opposed the opening of the Pandora's box of historical revisionism have been justified. In history, as in everything else, Gorbachev's "revolution from above" has provoked a "revolution from below," and it is sweeping all barriers before it. There is a historical dimension to every issue of the day. The national movements in

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the Baltic republics compel revelations about Soviet-Nazi relations in 1939-41, which in turn escalate the independence movements; the debate over agriculture focuses attention on the collectivization of the early 1930s; different interpretations of the NEP and earlier Bolshevik economic policies as far back as October 1917 are enlisted in the contemporary debate over economic reforms; and so on.

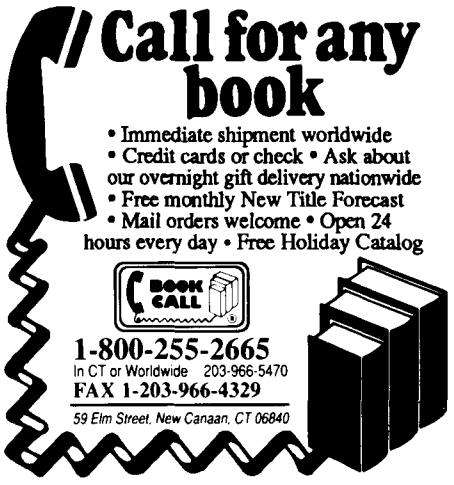
It is not surprising that, in the search for the causes of the present crisis, the historical inquiry has been pushed back to the origin of it all, to the Revolution itself. Much of this search, certainly its leading edge, has been the work of journalists and writers. Professional historians have proved to be, by and large, a conservative lot. They have certainly not leaped into the breach with daring new syntheses. At this critical juncture comes Richard Pipes's blockbuster history of the Russian Revolution, a narrative that asserts the primacy of politics, rejects the idea that 1917 was a "workers' revolution" (the February Revolution, which led to the fall of the old regime, was above all a military rebellion, and the October Revolution was a minoritarian coup d'état), argues that the foundations of the totalitarian state were laid by Lenin and his comrades immediately after seizing power and were substantially in place before Lenin's death in 1924 (so much for the "Stalinism-as-aberration" thesis), and bludgeons various minor myths about "Great October" in passing.

Pasted onto Pipes's book is the announcement that it is "soon to be published in the Soviet Union." I submit that its sales in the United States will look, by comparison, like a vanity press affair. Too bad for Knopf that the Russians can't pay dollars for it. In the absence of authoritative domestic accounts of the major "blank spots" in modern Russian history, Soviet publishers have begun to produce translations of the work of foreign historians. It is entirely typical of current Soviet attitudes toward the recent past that they have chosen, for the treatment of the Stalin period, not the recent revisionism (American, not Soviet) that has tended to treat the entire Stalinist phenomenon as a more or less ordinary problem of social mobility or bureaucratic politics, but that "cold war" classic, Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror*, a relentless catalog of the crimes of Stalin and his henchmen in the 1930s, and his later book chronicling the genocidal character of the so-called "collectivization of agriculture" in the early 1930s, *Harvest of Sorrow*. (The list of recent translations also includes highly critical biographical works on Stalin by Robert C. Tucker and Robert Slusser, as well as books by Stephen Cohen and Alexander Rabinowitch that focus on "democratic" alternatives to Stalinism in the Party.)

And now, for the story of the Revolution itself, they have chosen none of the new social history that has dominated American scholarship in the last decade or so, but Pipes's book, which is, in some ways, a historiographical throwback. Could it be that Pipes's Soviet publisher agrees with him that the recent social history of the Revolution contains a "built-in bias in favor of Lenin's regime" by supporting the main tenets of the Communist myth of the Revolution that (as Pipes recently wrote elsewhere) "in 1917 Russia experienced a revolution of workers who were abetted by the peasants, and that the Bolsheviks triumphed over their rivals because they enjoyed the support of the masses"? It may well turn out, in any event, that Pipes's book will be the first history of the Revolution published in the Soviet Union that attacks the historical foundations of Soviet ideology. It is ironic, and revealing, that this distinction should go to a book by the former bête noire of the Soviet history establishment, by the only American historian, so far as I know, to whose "bourgeois falsifications" an entire Soviet book, with his name in the title, has been devoted.

But keeping up with what the Russians are reading and thinking about their past is not the only reason to take heed of this new history of the Russian Revolution by the Baird Professor of History at Harvard. Scholarly syntheses of such proportions about one of the most important and controversial events of the twentieth century do not come along very often. Tracking down and plowing through the enormous body of published sources and literature (this book is based mostly on published materials) is a daunting task.

Pipes's claim that this is "the first attempt in any language to present a comprehensive view of the Russian Revolution" should be received with a little skepticism. He rightly notes that most histories of the Revolution focus on the "political and military struggles for power over Russia between 1917 and 1920," but there have certainly been books on the Russian Revolution that place it in a broader perspective. And there is no lack of survey histories that set the stage for 1917 by going back to the turn of the century, as Pipes does. Still, his book is unique as an attempt to combine a sustained historical interpretation with a detailed reconstruction of the principal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events in Russian history over the entire first two decades of the twentieth century. And about the years between 1917 and 1921, *The Russian Revolution* (and its projected sequel) is the first serious candidate to take the place of William Henry Chamberlin's classic two-volume study, which appeared in 1935. Like Chamberlin's work on the Revolution, Pipes's work is primarily narrative political history.

In Russia today, the ascendancy of the "political interpretation" of the Revolution over the "social interpretation" is nearly complete. This is due in part to the long suppression of simple political facts (Trotsky's role in the October coup, for example), but ultimately it is owed, I think, to the feeling that "political" implies alternatives, choices, while "social" implies fatality, inevitability. In Pipes's case, of course, the eschewal of social history in favor of political history is a consequence of his larger rejection of the view that the Russian Revolution was a "proletarian revolution." Pipes accuses the social history of the Revolution of a "pro-Soviet bias." The charge can be credited only if it is reduced to the view that there existed, according to the social historians, some kind of radical, socialist option that enjoyed considerable popular support in 1917, and that the Bolsheviks profited from that popular mood. Those propositions about 1917, however, seem incontrovertible.

Pipes's treatment of specific events of the Revolution is in many places remarkable, and some of his passing judgments are very interesting: for example, his argument that Lenin "bowed to the German *Diktat* [of Brest-Litovsk in the spring of 1918, which yielded to Germany almost a third of European Russia, including much of the best agricultural land and mineral resources], not because he believed that Germany would be unable to enforce it for very long, but, on the contrary, because he expected Germany to win and wanted to be on the winning side." Still, it is fair to say that the events of his story are for the most part the familiar ones (the February Revolution, the April crisis, the July Days, the Kornilov "revolt," the October coup, the Constituent Assembly crisis, Brest-Litovsk, and so on), and that few of his interpretations of specific episodes will surprise readers who know their Russian émigré and Western historiography, from S. P. Melgunov and George Katkov to J. L. H. Keep and Vladimir Brovkin. The more interesting ambitions of Pipes's enterprise are the larger ones: his mode of historical explanation, and the place of this book in his long view of the relation between the Russian past and the Soviet present.

Pipes's general perspective on the Russian Revolution may be described as follows. The autocratic monarchy that had ruled Russia since the fourteenth century could no longer cope with the demands of modernity, and gradually it lost out to a radical intelligentsia among whom a commitment to extreme utopian ideas was combined with a boundless lust for power. The process lasted about a century, from the beginnings of the organized

Leaves

1.

Every October it becomes important, no, *necessary*
to see the leaves turning, to be surrounded
by leaves turning; it's not just the symbolism,
to confront in the death of the year your death,
one blazing farewell appearance, though the irony
isn't lost on you that nature is most seductive
when it's about to die, flaunting the dazzle of its
incipient exit, an ending that at least so far
the effects of human progress (pollution, acid rain)
have not yet frightened you enough to make you believe
is real; that is, you know this ending is a deception
because of course nature is always renewing itself—
the trees don't *die*, they just pretend,
go out in style, and return in style: a new style.

2.

Is it deliberate how far they make you go
especially if you live in the city to get far
enough away from home to see not just trees
but only trees? The boring highways, roadsigns, high
speeds, 10-axle trucks passing you as if they were
in an even greater hurry than you to look at leaves:
so you drive in terror for literal hours and it looks
like rain, or *snow*, but it's probably just clouds
(too cloudy to see any color?) and you wonder,
given the poverty of your memory, which road had the
most color last year, but it doesn't matter since
you're probably too late anyway, or too early--
whichever road you take will be the wrong one
and you've probably come all this way for nothing.

3.

You'll be driving along depressed when suddenly
a cloud will move and the sun will muscle through
and ignite the hills. It may not last. Probably
won't last. But for a moment the whole world
comes to. Wakes up. Proves it lives. It lives—
red, yellow, orange, brown, russet, ocher, vermillion,
gold. Flame and rust. Flame and rust, the permutations
of burning. You're on fire. Your eyes are on fire.
It won't last, you don't want it to last. You
can't stand any more. But you don't want it to stop.
It's what you've come for. It's what you'll
come back for. It won't stay with you, but you'll
remember that it felt like nothing else you've felt
or something you've felt that also didn't last.

Lloyd Schwartz

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revolutionary movement in the 1860s to the death of Stalin in 1953. Only after Stalin's death did a process of "counterrevolution from above" set in, which by the late 1980s had finally led to "a rejection of a good part of the Revolution's legacy."

The central message of this periodization will be clear, at least to the initiated. It is that Stalin's "great break" at the end of the 1920s (*velikii perelom*, as it is known in Russian) was not Thermidor (as Trotsky said it was) or The Great Retreat from revolutionary idealism (as Nicholas Timasheff called it, in a once-famous book by that name), but a direct continuation of the "program of economic, social, and cultural transformation" that Lenin and the Bolsheviks brought to power in 1917. They had to postpone the transformation for several years at the end of the Civil War (1918-21), in order to give the ravaged country time to recover; but Stalin was, in any event, Lenin's true and worthy successor.

Within this overall perspective, Pipes identifies the quarter century from 1899 to 1924 ("from the outbreak of large-scale unrest at Russian universities ... to the death of Lenin") as the "culminating period" of the Russian Revolution. *The Russian Revolution* covers most of that era: its chronological narrative ends in the summer of 1918 with the outbreak of the Civil War and the murder of the imperial family (to which he devotes an entire chapter), but chapters on "War Communism," "War on the Village," and "The Red Terror" range over the Civil War years up to the proclamation of the NEP in the spring of 1921. (The story of the Civil War, the reintegration of most of the imperial borderlands, the new regime's foreign relations, cultural policies, and the internal political history from mid-1918 to Lenin's death in 1924 is all to be told in *Russian under the New Regime*, the promised sequel.) Pipes's rationale for marking the "culminating period" of the Revolution with the student strikes of 1899 is not perfectly plain, but his reason for ending it in 1924 can be stated fairly confidently, I think, without waiting on the sequel: it is to establish that the foundations of the totalitarian order were already in place in Lenin's lifetime.

Pipes's view of Stalinism as the direct and logical continuation of Leninism is nothing new, of course, in Western and émigré scholarship. Like the political interpretation of the Revolution, it is an old view, albeit one that has been hotly disputed in this country, first between Trotskyites and Stalinists in the political arena in the 1930s, and since World War II in more academic surroundings. It is clearly the "old view" that is in ascendancy in the Soviet Union today, much to the chagrin of those who are struggling to preserve the Party's "leading role." The present-day touchstone in the controversy over Stalinism in Western scholarship, as in the Soviet Union today much more broadly, is not one's opinion about Stalin's debt to Lenin, but one's opinion about the reformability of communism.

Pipes, again, is a continuity man: he sees fundamental continuity not only between Leninism and Stalinism, but more generally between Russia of the old regime and Russia of the new regime. His emphasis on the basic continuity between the Russian past and the Soviet present has incurred the special wrath of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the most outspoken advocate of the discontinuity thesis, in whose well-known view the Bolshevik Revolution, with its imported Western ideology, constituted a complete rupture in Russian history.

Pipes explains the outcomes of the Revolution by reference to structural and cultural components of traditional Russia. His chapters on the state, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia expound views that he has developed in his earlier work, *Russia under the Old Regime* (1974), and in his political writings. The old Russian monarchy, in Pipes's view, was an extreme form of the "patrimonial state," which he tends to describe in terms reminiscent of Egypt under the Old Kingdom pharaohs: the czar owned the country, there was no private property, everybody owed service to the state (or, in the case of the peasants, to the state's servitors).

Pipes's explanation for the appearance of this kind of state on the Eastern European plain is based, to a certain extent, on a geographical determinism (here Pipes follows the "state-school" Russian historians of the nineteenth century): this political form is what happens, he argues, if a state is to survive in a vast territory with a sparse population, poor climatic and soil conditions, and no natural frontiers. Because of the scarcity of resources and the absence of natural frontiers, this state was inherently expansionist. Its patrimonial order had been largely dismantled, of course, by the end of the nineteenth century, except in its political aspects, but the Soviet regime, emerging from the chaos of revolution and civil war, still reverted to the patrimonial tradition. "In Communist Russia, as in Muscovite *Rus'*, the government as represented by the bureaucratic and military elites owns the country."

The peasantry, still the overwhelming majority of the population at the turn of the century, was a brutish lot. Recently emancipated, mostly illiterate, living in communal tenure, the peasants had no understanding of law or private property, and were given to irrational outbursts of destruction; and these shortcomings came to be reflected in the course of the Russian Revolution. Pipes's extremely grim and generalized view of the peasantry leads him to misrepresent seriously the behavior of the Russian peasantry in the agrarian revolutions that accompanied the urban-political revolutions of the early twentieth century. In characterizing peasant disturbances in 1905-06, for example, as "irrational and even antirational, without a program," as the "Russian *bunt*" (rebellion) in which "it would be futile to seek any logic," Pipes ignores the evidence that, seen from the standpoint of their own values and their own grievances, the peasants' actions were, by and large, perfectly rational and "logical," and revealed quite definite "programs," in the sense that their actions were virtually always aimed at specific goals, which differed from region to region. It is difficult to square Pipes's assessment of the peasantry with the fact, which he himself scrupulously records, that in this great "*bunt*" or jacquerie a grand total of one noble landlord is known to have been killed in the entire country.

The Russian intelligentsia is described by Pipes as "the more extreme species" of the genus intelligentsia: "intellectuals craving for political power." An intelligentsia of sociologically significant proportions appeared in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century as a byproduct of the modernizing Russian state's investment in education. The central article of faith among the intelligentsia, an ideological product of secularizing European culture before the French Revolution, was the belief that man and society can be remade in conformity with the dictates of reason and justice. The characteristic extremism of the Russian intelligentsia was a consequence, according to Pipes, of its quasi-total exclusion from public life, and its cultural isolation

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from the non-Europeanized peasant masses. Pipes is inconsistent in his views of the Russian liberals, now describing them as members of the intelligentsia who opposed violent methods, now as non-members (they did not share the basic ideological premise) whose "left-wing tendency" was a matter of political strategy. His aim, however, is consistent; it is to explain why the liberals (and the moderate socialists) failed to stand up to the Bolsheviks in 1917. The Bolsheviks, of course, were the most extreme form of the extreme species.

The argument of Pipes's book, in sum, is that Russia's prerevolutionary "political culture," embodied in the state tradition (the bureaucratic culture), the peasantry (the mass culture), and the intelligentsia (the counterculture), predisposed Russia's revolution to an illiberal conclusion, to Soviet totalitarianism. As he has written elsewhere, "Political culture, shaped by a nation's historic experience, enters the nation's bloodstream and changes as slowly and reluctantly as does language or custom. . . . The explanation for Soviet totalitarianism must be sought not in socialism but in the political culture which draws on socialist ideas to justify totalitarian practices."

In a recent interview, Pipes observed that he "sides with Burke in many ways" in looking on the "tragedy" of the Russian Revolution from a "conservative-liberal point of view." He was referring, I suppose, to a combination of the liberal's individual-centered values with the conservative's pessimism about destroying historically shaped institutions. This may be a fair description of his political outlook. As a historical methodology, however, Pipes's creed seems more conservative than liberal. For Pipes, true change in political systems can only be slow and evolutionary.

The continuity of political culture, then, is Pipes's fundamental premise. His record in the world of policy (a great critic of détente, he was the National Security Council's Soviet expert in 1981-82) may leave, however, a slightly different impression. After all, his prescriptions to the Reagan administration—neutralize the Soviet military threat, withhold the political concessions and the economic assistance needed by the Soviet elite to maintain the status quo, and support forces for change inside the Soviet Union—were designed to bring about "an internal transformation of the Soviet system in the direction of economic decentralization, greater scope for contractual work and free enterprise, national self-determination, human rights, and legality." In government, at least, Pipes seemed to believe in the possibility of change in Russia. His objective as a policymaker in Washington was to bring about discontinuity in precisely the continuous political culture that he described as a professor in Cambridge.

Pipes never seems to have recognized the contradiction. More interesting, other scholars of Russia and the Soviet Union have come to almost the same hard-line policy conclusions on the basis of quite a different reading of Soviet history. Consider the case of Martin Malia, who recently attracted some notoriety as "Z." Malia, a professor of Russian history at Berkeley, has advocated a policy toward the Soviet Union very similar to Pipes's. He, too, sees a fundamental continuity between Leninism and Stalinism. Like Pipes, he believes that the Soviet system is inherently expansionist, and he, too, does not hesitate to call it "totalitarian," a term long out of vogue in American academia. For Malia, however, the Soviet system is Something New Under the Sun. More specifically, it is, in Malia's view, the product of the fusion, in the chaos of war and revolution, of a utopian vision with a fundamentally new kind of political order, the Party-state. Malia is, in Z's "To the Stalin Mausoleum" and in *Comprendre la Révolution russe*, which appeared in 1980, an anti-continuity man; he believes that the Russian Revolution constituted a radical break with the Russian past.

Malia and Pipes have fundamentally different views about the nature of Soviet totalitarianism. For Malia, ideology—that is, Marxian socialism, "abolition of the market," "noncapitalism"—is the essential element, which explains the power of the myth of Soviet progressivism among both Soviet and Western intellectuals, and also its association with a uniquely coercive and all-intrusive state, as well as its ultimate demise. For Pipes, "the explanation for Soviet totalitarianism must be sought not in socialism but in the political culture which draws on socialist ideas to justify totalitarian practices." The difference, in the end, is probably external to the particularities of Russian history; it concerns the nature of historical explanation. The issue is the role of ideas, or ideology, in history. Ideas matter, for Pipes, but not most.

Pipes's evolutionary view of history in general, and of Russian and Soviet history and culture in particular, has led him, I believe, to underestimate Russia's historical capacity for radical change. Of course there was continuity between the old Russian regime and the new Soviet regime. No reasonable person disputes that. But Pipes goes too far. He exaggerates the degree of continuity not only between the old and new regimes, but within the history of prerevolutionary Russia, too. For, at several junctures in its history before 1917, Russia was subjected to significant jolts or discontinuities in the form of "revolutions from above."

The paradigmatic "revolution from above" was that of "the crowned revolutionary" Peter I, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. That disruption fundamentally redefined (though not without earlier groundwork) the ideology of the state. Indeed, although the new secular ideas of "justice" and "the general weal" introduced by Peter coexisted for a long time with an indiscriminate use of the knout and a complete disregard for private property, it was Peter who began the dismantling of the "patrimonial state." Many historians believe, moreover, that the "Great Reforms" of the 1860s, first and foremost the abolition of serfdom, amounted to another "revolution from above," accommodating Russian philosophy of government to the modern European principles of private property, equality before the law, and constitutionalism. In fits and starts, the program of the Great Reforms moved toward realization over the last sixty years of the Romanov dynasty's existence. ("Revolution from above," from Ivan IV to Gorbachev, was the subject, in 1989, of one of the last books by Natan Eidel'man, a gifted Moscow writer and historian.)

And what of the "revolution from above" that began in October 1917? Pipes's cherished thesis about continuity is contradicted not least by his own account of the Russian Revolution. His massive, unfinished account lends unwitting weight to the *dis*continuity thesis. (Perhaps we should call it the continuity-in-discontinuity thesis.) What else is one to conclude from reading Pipes's detailed account of the construction of the Party-state on the ruins of the law, through the institutionalization of terror and the concentration camp as instruments of governance? Surely these political forms included innovations. Surely their significance was not only, as Pipes would have us believe, that they "marked a reversion to the autocratic regime that had ruled Russia before 1905: they simply wiped out the twelve intervening years of constitutionalism."

Or take his description of the Bolsheviks' attempt, between 1918 and 1921, to realize what he himself portrays earlier in his book as the socialist dream of the European intelligentsia—a perfectly rational, marketless economy: nationalization of everything (except, perforce, agriculture), liquidation of all private commerce, elimination of money, introduction of a single plan for the entire national

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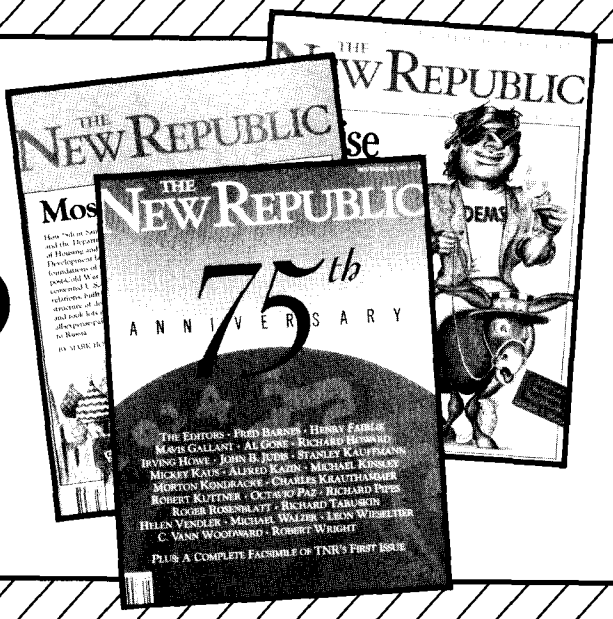

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economy, and so on. Are we really to believe that "in spirit . . . , War Communism resembled most the patrimonial regime (*tiagloe gosudarstvo*) of medieval Russia"? Or consider his own description of the new regime's foreign policy; he himself claims that its foreign policy was characterized by the introduction of entirely new principles of international relations. One could go on and on, even to his detailed account of the murder of the imperial family (the most detailed I have ever seen in a general history), which Pipes interprets as symbolic of the advent of a new kind of political morality,

> something that radically distinguishes it from previous acts of regicide and brands it as a prelude to twentieth-century mass murder. . . . When a government arrogates to itself the power to kill people, not because of what they had done or even might do, but because their death is "needed," we are entering an entirely new moral realm.

Pipes's view of Russia's immutability, finally, his rigid notion of continuity in Russian history, has not been particularly helpful, finally, for predicting or understanding the nature of the crisis in the Soviet Union today, the enormity of the changes that have already taken place. Gorbachev has called his perestroika "a revolution from above," and he had Russian precedents properly in mind. In another unacknowledged contradiction between his study of history and his commentary on politics, Pipes remarks, in the introduction to his book, which was written in May 1989, that a "kind of counterrevolution from above" that "appears to have led to a rejection of a good part of the Revolution's legacy" is occurring in the Soviet Union today. It is difficult to see how his views on political culture, on the role of tradition in Soviet affairs, could have prepared him for the radical changes that we are witnessing; indeed, Pipes was certain, as late as January 1989, that "revisionist history [in the Soviet Union] will never touch Lenin."

But I do not mean to fault Pipes for poor prophecy. Who *was* prepared for the changes that we are witnessing? One thing seems certain: our perspectives on the relationship between the Russian past and the Soviet present will continue to change as events unfold. For the time being, does it seem entirely unreasonable to speculate that one day a period of seventy-odd years that began with the events chronicled in *The Russian Revolution* may be looked upon as an interlude in a long process of Russia's integration into Europe that was begun when Peter I threw open his famous window to the West?

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Speaking in Tongues

BY HILLEL HALKIN

The Meaning of Yiddish by Benjamin Harshav

(University of California Press, 205 pp., $24.95)

The scenes remembered best from our childhoods are often the ones we least understood. Thus I can recall sitting, as a boy of 10 or 11, with my father and a visitor of his, a short, portly man who smoked cigars and was the son, I had been told, of a dead but famous Yiddish writer. I didn't like my father's guest—he had a hoarse, aggressive voice that was too big for our New York living room, which he had no business smelling up with his cigar smoke—and I sensed that my father didn't either. Indeed, the two were suddenly fighting in loud tones. "You're finishing the work of the Nazis," the portly man shouted. "Jews beaten in the streets for speaking Yiddish! A crime for a Jew to use his own language in a Jewish state!" "I beg your pardon," retorted my father. I had never seen him so flushed. "Yiddish is not my language, but no one in Israel was ever arrested for using it. I'll tell you who was arrested: hundreds and thousands of writers and readers of Hebrew by your *Yevseks*!"

What was a *Yevsek*? And how could anyone think that Yiddish was against the law in Israel? And why did my father say that it was not his language when he had grown up in it, and still exchanged secrets in it with my mother? Although I did not know any of the answers, I had learned something nonetheless, which was that if Yiddish, a language I had never reflected on before, could make my father so angry, this was because it was an enemy of Hebrew, in which my parents told no secrets because, thanks to their efforts, my sister and I already knew it too well.

I never pursued the matter with my father, and many years went by before I discovered that a *Yevsek* was a Jewish commissar, one of whose duties was the liquidation of Hebrew culture in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, a period when cultural activity in Yiddish was still encouraged by the Communist authorities; that although Yiddish was indeed quite legal in Israel, its use in public had been frowned upon by patriots of Hebrew in the pre-state Palestinian Yishuv, where speakers of it were sometimes openly harassed; and that when my father disclaimed it as his language, he was speaking not personally but as a Hebraist and Zionist pursuing an old quarrel, though one already settled by history in his favor, over what the "Jewish national language" was and should be. He was too judicious a man, I am sure, to have approved of anti-Yiddish vigilantism, but he would have agreed with its practitioners that Hebrew's supremacy in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv was in the nature of a sacred cause.

It is a cause whose victory has been so complete, while the worldwide annihilation of Yiddish has been so nearly total, that it is difficult today to imagine the passions stirred up by the great language war that raged in Jewish-nationalist circles for the better part of the first half of this century. The argument in our living room was but the fag end of this battle, which was itself part of an even greater debate between the two great ideological contestants in twentieth-century Jewish life, Palestinian-oriented Zionism and Eastern European-based socialism.

Language and politics did not always go together—there were leading Zionists such as Herzl who were far from enthusiastic about Hebrew and prominent representatives of Yiddish like Sholom Aleichem who were sympathetic to Zionism—but generally speaking, the linguistic and political lines converged. The socialists/Yiddishists viewed the Zionists/Hebraists as utopian romantics engaged in distracting the Jewish masses from the real struggle of transforming their lives where they lived, while the Zionists/Hebraists considered the socialists/Yiddishists to be cultural vandals willing to sell the heritage of their people for a mess of revolutionary pottage. And of course, on the flanks of these two warring camps were other large groups of Jews who had no use for either Hebraism or Yiddishism: the out-and-out assimilationists; the Communists, though they sometimes tactically allied themselves with the Yiddishist program of Jewish cultural autonomy in Eastern Europe; and the Orthodox, who clung to both Hebrew and Yiddish in daily life but scorned the idea of either being an end in itself.

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The Hebrew-Yiddish polemic was especially bitter because it literally took place between brothers. Practically no Eastern European Jew who was a Zionist and pro-Hebrew had not grown up speaking Yiddish as his mother tongue, while many of the Yiddishists had received Hebrew educations in their youth. Thus it was not uncommon in the Russia or Poland of 1910 or 1920 to find several partisans of each language in one family. Indeed, the battle lines frequently ran through inwardly torn individuals: modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature exemplify this ambivalence well.

There were writers like Sholem Aleichem who began in Hebrew and switched to Yiddish, others like Uri Tsvi Greenberg who began in Yiddish and switched to Hebrew, and still others like Hillel Zeitlin who wrote in both languages throughout their careers. There were Hebrew poets like Bialik who now and then penned Yiddish verses almost surreptitiously, and Yiddish authors like Peretz who kept coming back to Hebrew long after they had ostensibly renounced it. Perhaps the most extraordinary case was that of Mendele Mocher Seforim ("Mendele the Bookseller," the pen name of Sholom Ya'akov Abromovitsh), a towering figure in both literatures, who wrote his early work entirely in Hebrew, abandoned it for a brilliant career in Yiddish, and then—responding perhaps to a premonition of what the future held in store—returned to Hebrew, in which he recast his Yiddish books during the last decades of his life.

It is a remarkable story of symbiosis and almost fratricidal conflict, this battle between two languages and their twentieth-century literatures that were born from a single cultural womb—and it seems a pity that, in the somewhat lame concluding chapters of his otherwise fine little guide to the history and the structure of Yiddish, Benjamin Harshav refers to it only in passing and does not devote more space to it. After all, as Harshav points out at great length, the relationship of Hebrew to Yiddish—or more precisely, of the Hebrew in Yiddish to the latter's Germanic base—is largely what makes Yiddish the unique language that it is, one possessing referential and tonal dimensions that have no parallel elsewhere. Without the Hebrew that is to be found in the foreground or background of a high percentage of its utterances, Yiddish—had Jews spoken it at all—would have been little more than another German dialect affected by its Slavic environment, something akin perhaps to the *Volksdeutsch* spoken along the Volga. There was thus a tragic closure in the way the two languages, for so long intimate partners in the Jewish soul, fought for its exclusive possession in the end.

And yet paradoxically, what made Hebrew so potent a presence in Yiddish was precisely the fact that it was never fully absorbed by it, as languages that influence other languages generally are. If one thinks of the enormous impact on medieval English of French, for example, one may say that although the Latin-French source of many English words ("compartment," "demonstration," "dissertation") is readily recognizable, that of many others ("touch," "beef," "test") is not, and that contemporary speakers of English do not normally distinguish between the French and Anglo-Saxon origins of the words they use. This is not on the whole the case with Yiddish and Hebrew. Indeed, as Harshav writes,

> this is what Yiddish is all about: the individual words may be very simple but their interaction—involving pieces of texts and divergent languages and cultural situations rather than mere lexical denotations—makes it rich, ironic, plurisignifying.
>
> In Yiddish, the casual family language, expressions from [Hebrew] religious texts . . . function as metaphors, linking meanings from the lofty, religious domain to secular situations. Thus the Hebrew-derived *TOYre* in Yiddish may, indeed, denote the "Torah" (in its original sense) as well as any teaching, belief, or theory. But *siz nisht aza GROYse TOYre* ("it is not such a difficult theory") may apply to something as secular as learning to cook a certain dish and actually means: "It is not such a big deal."

The irony in such a usage, in other words, depends on what Harshav calls the "situational" contrast between a Hebrew word's original context and its Yiddishized context—and for this contrast to be effective, the Yiddish speaker must be aware of both. Nor need such effects be ironic. Take, for instance (the example is my own), the Hebrew-derived Yiddish words for the four cardinal directions, *mizrakh* (east), *mayriv* (west), *tsofn* (north), and *dorem* (south). At first glance it might seem odd that Yiddish did not use the German *ost*, *west*, *nord*, and *süd*, since it generally preferred Germanic words for everyday concepts that were not specifically Jewish. Indeed, the explanation in this case is that two of these words do have special Jewish meanings, *mizrakh* denoting also the eastern end of the synagogue where the Holy Ark stands and *mayriv* the evening prayer. When a Yiddish speaker says *tsofn* or *dorem* the words are no more emotionally tinted than our own "north" and "south," but *mizrakh*, even when used purely technically, can still glow with a faint devotional aura, while *mayriv* may suggest the waning of day and the melancholy tones of the evening service. Thus, as Harshav observes, speakers of Yiddish shuttle back and forth between the referential systems of two worlds, one sacred and one profane, and in doing so ring numerous changes that may be comic, elevating, or even full of yearning.

Moreover, as Harshav remarks, Hebrew is frequently present in Yiddish even when it does not seem to be. As an example he gives

> the seemingly simple collocation: *tseZEYT un tseSHPREYT* ("scattered and dispersed," "sown to the wind"). It may be used to indicate a person's scattered family, his disorderly clothes, or his books published in various places. But the underlying allusion is to a central image of Jewish historical consciousness, the dispersion of the Jews. The subtext is in the Book of Esther (3:8): "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of the kingdom." The two Hebrew verbs in the source, *mefuzar u-mefurad* (scattered and dispersed), are linked by morphological and sound parallelism . . . and [have been] transposed into Yiddish words of German origin: *tseZEYT un tseSHPREYT*. This pair is, again, parallel in sound and morphology, but, instead of alliteration, it uses end-rhyme. . . . In a statistical count of Yiddish lexemes, the phrase would be registered only for its German components, but its actual subtext is Hebrew and its semantic substance is specifically Jewish.

Nor does he leave it at that. "And now," Harshav adds ingeniously, "the matter becomes even more complicated":

> This Yiddish idiom is often augmented to *tseZEYT un tseSHPREYT oyf ale shive yamim* ("scattered and dispersed over all the seven seas"). Indeed, these Hebrew words are not used in normal Yiddish: "seven" in Yiddish is *zibn* and the plural of *yam* ("sea") is *yamen* (the proper phrase would be: *oyf ale zibn yamen*). By using a phrase in real Hebrew rather than in the Hebrew that merged in Yiddish, the impression of an authoritative quotation is achieved. But, in reality, this Hebrew phrase is absent from the Bible and is . . . coined from the European collocation "seven seas." The vocabulary and semantics of the German and Hebrew components in each part of the larger idiom have thus been reversed: semantically, the German words have a Hebrew subtext, and Hebrew words a European one.

Harshav divides the Hebrew vocabulary of Yiddish into three categories, which he calls the "*basic*, *merged*, and *extension* layers of the language." "With *basic* Yiddish words," he writes,

> one is hardly aware of their origins. . . . Words of the second kind are *merged* in the language and are perceived as fully and authentically Yiddish, but the speakers are *component conscious* about them. Words of the third category are not fully legitimate

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> or domesticated in Yiddish but are still widely used and understood. . . . There is no defined limit to this extension; indeed, it opens the doors to three compendious verbal stocks outside of Yiddish proper, three languages and cultural worlds within a speaker's reach that he may use to enlarge the potential of his expression . . .

The third "verbal stock" from which Yiddish freely draws is, of course, that of the Slavic languages, mainly Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian, which are estimated to account for some 10 percent of Yiddish vocabulary. These Slavic words, too, may be either "basic," "merged," or "extended," so that many of them can be played off against the Germanic base of Yiddish in some of the same ways as Hebrew. If Hebrew, writes Harshav, "is felt to add a tone of Jewishness" to Yiddish speech, Slavic "often adds either something concrete, from nature, something intimate and sentimental, or something Eastern European and lower class, even coarse." It is a bit as though Hebrew were sometimes Yiddish's superego and Slavic sometimes its id.

One suspects, in fact, that it was the mediation of Hebrew that made possible this free assimilation of Slavic loanwords, since if, before their migration eastward, the original speakers of Yiddish had not already been accustomed to the liberal spicing of their German with a non-Germanic vocabulary, it is doubtful they would have been as receptive to the Slavic languages as they were. Thus if it was the presence of Hebrew in Yiddish that created the phenomenon that Harshav (following the Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich) calls "fusion," it was also Hebrew that set the pattern for what he calls Yiddish's "openness," its ability to borrow almost unlimitedly from other sources without compromising its own integrity. (The old joke about the immigrant grandmother who asks her American-born grandson, *"Zug mir, zunnele, vi zugt men 'chicken' oyf english?*, "Tell me, sonny, how do you say 'chicken' in English?" is actually an astute comment on this capacity.)

By the same token, as Harshav remarks, it was, if not Hebrew itself, then certainly the influence of such widely studied Hebrew and Hebrew-Aramaic texts as the Talmud and its commentaries that was responsible for the peculiarly dialectic structure of so much of ordinary Yiddish speech, which,

> advances not in a straight line, through affirmative statements or the logic of a problem presented in a hierarchical argument, but through . . . asking a question; challenging a claim; looking for a counterargument or an alternative possibility; answering with an example, a simile, or an analogical situation; illustrating a point by telling a story, an anecdote, or a parable; quoting a holy text or a proverb; posing a riddle; telling a joke; leaping to metalanguage and metadiscourse and pondering on the language used and on the purpose of the whole conversation . . .

Of course, the linguistic influence was not one-sided. Over the centuries Yiddish speech enormously influenced the writing of rabbinical Hebrew, primarily in sentence structure and idiom, and secondarily in counter-loanwords. Indeed, such well-known early nineteenth-century Hasidic texts as *The Praises of the Baal Shem Tov* or *The Stories of Rabbi Nachman* are full of Yiddish words for everyday objects that their authors did not know how to name in Hebrew. As long as the two languages divided up the world between them, Hebrew being awarded the spheres of writing, reading, and prayer and Yiddish the sphere of daily speech, they borrowed unselfconsciously from each other without competitiveness or the zealotry of purism, each secure in its own unchallenged domain. It was only when they fell under the sway of the linguistic nationalism of the nineteenth century, with its creed of language as the all-shaping and all-conveying medium of a nation's *Geist*, that this division of labor was called into question.

It was Yiddish that first crossed the lines and infringed upon Hebrew's traditional monopoly of the written word, in the form of such initial attempts to create an independent literature as the mid-nineteenth-century fiction of I. M. Dick and Joseph Perl, the plays of Shlomo Ettinger, and the poetry of Simon Frug. Hebrew was slower to assert its counterclaim to the realm of speech (the first serious attempts to revive it as a spoken language were made by Eastern European immigrants to Palestine only in the 1890s), but many years earlier Hebrew writers had begun ridiculing *zhargon*, as Yiddish was popularly called by its own speakers, and purging Yiddishisms from their prose.

By the early years of the present century, the skirmishing had become open warfare. At a historic conference of Yiddish writers held in Czernowitz in 1908 Yiddish literature was affirmed as Hebrew literature's full equal, and a resolution declaring Yiddish the sole national language of the Jews came close to being passed, while in Palestine in 1913 an occasionally violent boycott was organized of a new technical high school whose language of instruction was German. Of course, German was not Yiddish—but it was close enough to attract Yiddish-speaking students, and the reaction would not have been the same had the school proposed teaching in English or French.

As my father's son I am not unbiased, yet looking back today with the benefit of hindsight, one thing seems undeniable: although the Yiddishists, who claimed to be the wave of the Jewish future, were backed by the weight of the past when they scoffed at the prospect of reviving a dead language, something that had never been done before in human history, the Hebraists, who spoke in the name of the Jewish past, had the future on their side when they insisted that Yiddish was doomed. Despite the understandable tendency of Yiddishists like my father's guest to blame the disappearance of the language on the catastrophic intervention of the Nazis, who indeed greatly quickened its demise, the evidence is clear that, due to cultural assimilation, the number of Yiddish speakers was rapidly declining all over the world long before Hitler came to power. Yiddish would have vanished without the Holocaust too, although at a slower rate—and anyone doubting this need only ponder the Jewish communities of the Soviet Union and the United States, which differ from each other in every respect except for the fact that both had millions of Yiddish speakers fifty years ago and have practically none left today.

The last holdouts against the death of Yiddish are the ultra-Orthodox communities of New York and Jerusalem, where new generations of children are still being raised in the language. But apart from the fact that it is uncertain whether they will in turn raise their children the same way, since they are growing up to be perfectly bilingual and speak English or Hebrew as fluently as Yiddish, the irony is that these last Yiddish-speaking enclaves are totally inhospitable to everything that modern Yiddishism stood for. Militant bastions of anti-secularism, their attitude toward both Yiddish and Hebrew is hardly different from that of Jews 200 years ago; and though they may harbor a few clandestine readers of Yiddish literature in their midst, they are about the last places on earth where one might expect to find a public library stocked with Yiddish novels, a series of Yiddish poetry readings, or an evening of Yiddish folk song. Jews just like the Jews who live in these communities may populate the pages of Mendele and Peretz, but their own Jews are unlikely even to know who Mendele and Peretz were.

Cruelly, Yiddish literature and culture will have to survive as best they

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can in translation, except for the small number of interested Jews who manage to acquire some knowledge of the language. In my own case, this was not difficult. Despite his opinions, my father subscribed to a daily Yiddish newspaper, the *Morgen Zhurnal*, in addition to which we also received *The New York Times* at home every day—and since, having hardly any reporters on its minuscule staff, the *Morgen Zhurnal* copied most of its news items from the *Times* of the day before, I was soon reading Yiddish with the help of yesterday's *Times* and the German I was studying in high school.

Yiddish literature, though, was something else, because here my Hebraist prejudices remained a barrier. For years, indeed, while I was reading and translating Bialik, Brenner, Gnessin, and Agnon, figures like Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, Mani Leyb and Moshe-Leyb Halpern were but names for me, men I refused to credit with a status equal to that of the Hebrew writers I knew. It was only in midlife, initially through my work as a translator, that I first made their acquaintance—and, to my surprise and mixed joy and chagrin, discovered a body of Jewish writing that was if anything superior to its Hebrew counterpart.

Agnon's greatness is incontestable, but no one ever wrote about modern Jewish life as dazzlingly and deeply as Aleichem; and while Bialik is a fine lyric poet, he is no match for the expressive power and ferocity of imagination of a Halpern. And go find, if you can, a twentieth-century Hebrew drama that is the equal of a wild masterpiece like Peretz's *Night in the Old Marketplace*. Although the Hebraist in me still reproaches Peretz for abandoning Hebrew (in which he seems stiff and restrained) for Yiddish, the lover of literature that I am is thankful that he unshackled his genius in this way.

But perhaps now that the war between the two languages is over, the time has come to recognize, as Harshav states, that "to a large extent Hebrew and Yiddish were one literature, with the same writers and the same readers often shifting from one language to another," notwithstanding the fact that "each language had its own, entirely separate books, journals, and publications." Even in the period of their fiercest competition, Hebrew and Yiddish writers were writing about the same world and about many of the same types and situations. That they often did so from opposed cultural and ideological perspectives only makes their work today seem more complementary, so that in this sense, at least, the partnership between the two languages continued unabated to the end. Of all the dozens of languages besides Hebrew used by Jews throughout their history, only Aramaic, the language of the Gemara, much of the Midrash, the Zohar, and small sections of the Bible and the prayerbook can compare to Yiddish in its importance and in the cultural legacy it has left. Although no Jew has spoken Aramaic for a thousand years, Aramaic still speaks to Jews—but only in conjunction with Hebrew, without a knowledge of which the study of Aramaic is senseless. The case with Yiddish is likely to be the same.

HILLEL HALKIN is a writer and translator who lives in Israel.

Moral Swamp

BY VERLYN KLINKENBORG

Killing Mr. Watson by Peter Matthiessen

(Random House, 384 pp., $21.95)

Peter Matthiessen writes, as we all do, in an ironic age when moralists who love their morals are generally repugnant. But Matthiessen, who understands that uneasy moralists appeal to ironic minds, has grounded his career on a sense of responsibility, whether to individuals, to cultures, or to nature at large, which we may as well call morality. His early novels are filled with figures who unwillingly assume responsibility of one kind or another for people they might easily and reasonably disavow. The reader notices a repeated question in Matthiessen's fiction, a question that I think is ultimately the same one that led him into the strong vein of naturalist nonfiction—if that is the phrase for a body of work, almost a separate career, that includes *The Snow Leopard* and *Men's Lives*—that has coexisted with and at times eclipsed his fiction. The question is this: Am I my brother's keeper? It has a corollary: How am I to know my brother?

In his early novels, Matthiessen's protagonists keep their brothers despite themselves. In *Race Rock* (1954) George McConville, heir to moneyed ineffectuality, assumes responsibility for his relations with two disturbing figures from his boyhood, Daniel Barleyfield, a half-breed Indian, and Cady Shipman, a tough case George simultaneously envies and hates. In *Partisans* (1955) Barney Sand, an American journalist, risks his neck for an expelled Communist named Jacobi—himself at risk in defense of his principles—with whom he had only a brief encounter as a child. In *Raditzer* (1961) Charlie Stark protects the novel's eponymous anti-hero, a weasel of a man who inspires distaste in everyone including Stark, whose revulsion somehow turns into responsibility. As Raditzer teeters toward his suicide before a troop of fellow soldiers, only Stark is able to say, as Peter after Gethsemane couldn't, "I know him." These characters do not love the responsibility they have taken, and yet they have taken it. There is nothing priggish in them or their actions; the morality they exercise seems to arise from the preconditions of human existence.

In *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (1965) Matthiessen first brought to his fiction a glimpse of the difficult terrain he often explores in his nonfiction, where he is an unparalleled traveler and adventurer. (Though he is never just that: an adventurer's motives are too blurred, his purposes too sybaritic even at the extremes of discomfort. Matthiessen's writings in the absurdly masculine literature of adventure are nearly always marked by a richer and more meditative consciousness than one usually finds there.) *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* pits two men against each other in the South American jungle. One, Martin Quarrier (names are everything in this novel), is a raw-boned Protestant missionary out to save the Niaruna Indians; the other, Lewis Moon, part Cheyenne, is a renegade so ironic as to be totally disengaged from life. Quarrier dies having lost faith in his own ability to convert the Niaruna; Moon is reborn as a primitive among them.

In answering the question, am I my brother's keeper?, one normally draws the boundaries of moral kinship as narrowly as is conscionable and as widely as is practicable. But in *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, Matthiessen implies that we have no way of defining limits to our responsibility for each other because we

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are bound together—individuals, cultures, species—in an interdependent whole. Responsibility in Matthiessen's sense is not the white man's burden, the paternalist task of lifting an individual or a race into useful servitude, but the burden of preservation, of non-violation, the ecological imperative: a morality based on identity but also on respect for otherness. It is a hard morality to bear, for it tends to convert the converted, turning missionaries into anthropologists, moralists into ironists (and sometimes vice versa).

Heroic in conception, however small their scale may sometimes be, these early novels are driven by the collision of will and judgment. *Far Tortuga* (1975) is completely different. It is a work of pure perception. There is no undercurrent of narrative anticipation and no conventional narration, just unimpassioned observation of the present. The plot traces the voyage of the turtling schooner *Lillias Eden* from its embarkation at Georgetown, Grand Cayman, to its sinking on the Miskito Banks off Nicaragua. But in a strict sense there is no plot, only the passing of time—the wake of the ship against the constant sea—told in the staccato sentences of a narrator who seems merely to overhear what the crew is saying and to see in flashes the sights they see. Despite his terseness, his poetic self-denial, the presence of the narrator is strongly felt, portraying a single, dying economy, a unique interdependence between one creature—the turtle—its habitat, and the men who sustain themselves upon it. The moral character of *Far Tortuga* arises from Matthiessen's choice of subject—men at the distant reaches of subsistence, outside the conventional boundaries of Western fiction—and it resides in the clarity of his vision of nature, a clarity akin to revelation.

Superficially, *Killing Mr. Watson*, Matthiessen's new novel and his first in fifteen years, is a Western set on the edge of the Everglades. Edgar J. Watson, a man with great personal force and a mysterious past, comes to town one day in the early 1890s—town in this case being the forbidding Ten Thousand Islands region in southwestern Florida, where dry land is scarce and the primary vocation is egret-plume hunting for the fashion trade. Watson prospers far beyond his neighbors. Word of his past, rumored to contain several murders, gets out, and in the subsequent uncertainty caused by the fact that "you didn't ask a man hard questions, not in the Ten Thousand Islands, not in them days," his reputation becomes greatly exaggerated (or does it?). After a hurricane devastates the coast, Watson returns to the town of Chokoloskee, where his wife and children have waited out the storm. There he is gunned down by nearly all of Chokoloskee's men acting in concert (we learn this in the novel's first ten pages). Their provocation was the discovery of the murder of a man and woman at Watson's homestead. But as Sheriff Frank Tippins remarks of the vigilantes, "It wasn't justice they was after but a good night's sleep."

As in *Far Tortuga*, Matthiessen depicts almost offhandedly (which is the tone his characters use) the complex relations that exist between humans and their environment, both social and natural. He shows us the steady degradation of nature, the inroads on a wilderness as first one species then another is shot out, fished out, or driven away. Those who do the shooting, fishing, and driving reveal a wry awareness of environmental decay that gradually deepens into sadness as time passes. "Used to call this place God's country," Bill House says, "and we still do, cause nobody but God would want no part of it." This is a fitting spot for Watson, who imagines himself a developer, someone who will drain the Everglades and put all that useless swampland to the plow.

Matthiessen creates one memorable voice after another, until the reader ends up enjoying the texture of speech in this novel most of all. In the local accent, broadened by racial confusion, Matthiessen delivers the stern flatness of experience found in a near-wilderness, where men and women are too much alone with their thoughts. He conveys the occasional poetry (and humor) of ordinary people without overbuilding its significance or making his characters sound like a lost colony of bards. Their stories loop and spin and digress with an easy disregard for consequence, without vitiating the novel's narrative tension. Because the denouement opens the book, there is no tension, only a steadily thickening atmosphere, a slowly worsening tropical depression.

At the heart of *Killing Mr. Watson* lies a surprising emptiness, surprising most of all because of the moral intensity of Matthiessen's previous novels. *Killing Mr. Watson* stands apart from the rest of Matthiessen's fiction by the amorality of the world it depicts, by the absence from it of a point of judgment, a position from which ethical issues might become clear. The men who shoot Watson do so because they are certain, as the narrator of the prologue—who disappears for good three pages later—says, that "if no one is innocent, none can be guilty." Their motive is cowardice, not respect for law;

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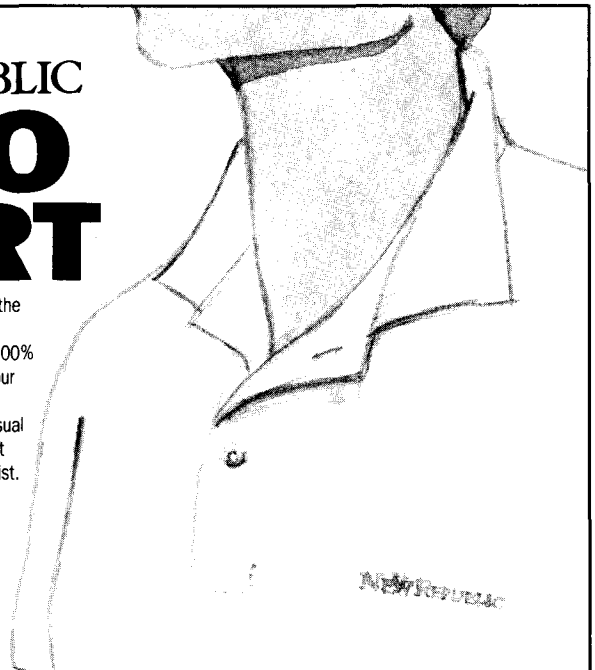

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what offends them about Watson is not his reputation but the way his cold eyes make them kowtow in public. Their stand is no more dignified and ultimately less principled than what Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!* (another novel about a mysterious stranger with a suspicious past) calls "meddling interference arising out of the disapprobation of all communities of men toward any situation which they do not understand." At its best, their communal act—killing Mr. Watson—is an ironic, degraded form of the responsibility Matthiessen's earlier characters take upon themselves.

Among those who knew him there is an attempt of sorts to invest Watson with mythic proportions, to justify his fate. A French ornithologue says of him, "He is—accurs-ed [sic]." Mamie Smallwood remarks, "Say what you like about Mister Watson, he looked and acted like our idea of a hero." One night, after Watson has nearly been caught in a sugarcane fire, he makes a sort of confession to a young man who is barely competent to understand much less assess his words. He explains how he came to the Ten Thousand Islands, but he admits to no crimes. Instead, he offers this precept: "Here's the lesson I learned, Henry, and I learned it well, and it's stood me in good stead all my life: No decent American is going to believe that a man who pays his bills is a common criminal, no matter what!" We come no closer to Watson than this piece of ambiguity, the credo of any white-collar swindler. We never learn whether he is guilty of the crimes that have fallen at his doorstep, and so we never know whether or not to justify the vigilantes. By the end of this novel, some readers will have joined the posse that shoots Watson down, some won't: "If no one is innocent, none can be guilty."

It may have been part of Matthiessen's purpose in *Killing Mr. Watson* to force the reader into this quandary, to make us confront the specter of frontier justice that rests only on a belief that no one has the courage to verify. Or it may be that this quandary arises through a flaw in the novel itself. As Matthiessen states in his author's note, there is a "fact" to the Watson story: such a man lived and died on the southwest coast of Florida, and out of the fragments of his life the local inhabitants created a lurid myth. Matthiessen has chosen to cast his narrative in the manner of nonfiction, to make it read like a series of depositions. In a sense, he has been truer to his voices than to his larger tale. The reader is distanced from Watson by a kind of cracker humor, a backwoods irony that works against revelation and judgment. Much as the reader delights in these voices, there is no consensus, and the divisions that exist among them do not clarify the matters of guilt or justice at all. The voice the reader yearns to hear, Watson's own, never speaks at length. (A diary of Watson's is mentioned at one point but never quoted.) The narrator we hope to find—one who understands the truth buried in this muddle, one we would like to associate with Matthiessen—does not exist. The reader is left to seek evidence of Watson's guilt or innocence only among the stuff from which his guilt was fabricated by the men who murdered him—a tissue of gossip and rumor.

Because of this ambiguity, the nerve leaks out of the novel, and the tragedy, always threatening, filters away. The reader is left with the sense that when the book is done, when Mr. Watson has been buried in a sandbar and the town of Chokoloskee has begun to soothe its guilty righteousness, every question raised by the appearance of this man and by his killing remains unanswered. Not every dark story is a tragedy. Tragedy requires consciousness and inevitability, sensing one's fate without being able to avert it, the quality that leads one to ask what mistake it was that brought down the whole of one's ambition. There is no consciousness to spare among the characters in this book. Watson's utmost ambition is to outlive his past, which no one ever does. To the last he believes that he is stronger, quicker, and smarter than the men who gather at the Chokoloskee landing to unload their rifles and shotguns into him. In the end, Bill House, one of the men who murdered Watson, says, "His death weren't no tragedy!" He is right. The tale of those men, and the part they played in killing Mr. Watson, is no tragedy either, just a good, dark story.

VERLYN KLINKENBORG's *The Last Fine Time* will be published by Knopf in January.

TRB *continued from page 4*

terests" slowed it down. Baker, by contrast, was "so preoccupied with momentous events elsewhere in the world that he failed to follow up. . . ." Damn! In fact, as the same *Journal* article notes, the State Department did not merely fail to follow up on sanctions, it was "working at cross purposes" by blocking congressional efforts against Iraq.

• A column in *The Economist* of October 13-19, which begins by comparing America's Gulf adventure to the Vietnam quagmire. It continues: "Is there someone, anyone, in Washington who thinks that the same ghastly mistake is going to be made all over again?" The amazing answer: "If there is, his name is probably James Addison Baker III." Of course there are many people in Washington who are not afraid to publicly predict disaster in the Gulf. None of them is named James Addison Baker III. The article offers no evidence that anyone named James Addison Baker III may secretly share their view. Therefore, it is the result either of a leak or of a fevered imagination. If Washington's (perhaps the world's) greatest self-positioner is now stashing away a little deniability for future use, that is the best sign yet that Bush's policy may be in trouble.

And if Baker really does disagree with a policy that may yet kill thousands of Americans and others, he ought to resign now for that reason. To pursue a policy you think is wrong, while busily distancing yourself not just from past failures but from future ones as well, is precisely the opposite of ministerial responsibility.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

blowing from Capitol Hill."

Surely Luttwak does not mean to suggest that the U.S. Navy serves no other purpose than to fight other navies. In virtually every one of more than 200 crisis responses since World War II—including Operation Desert Shield—the president has called on the ability of the Navy and Marine Corps to project power against an adversary *ashore*. Maritime forces are uniquely mobile, flexible, and self-contained, and they offer a range of policy options—from a deterrent show of resolve, to an air strike, to an amphibious assault supported by naval gunfire and carrier-based air power. Right now, in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the eastern Mediterranean, the Navy serves the additional—and currently very active—purpose of enforcing the U.N.-sanctioned embargo of Iraq.

Thousands of sailors and Marines are serving their nation's strategy—not the Navy's budget—in the Middle East, and that requires the unified capabilities of all the services working together, on the ground, in the air, and from the sea. Luttwak's conclusion that one service alone should be facing Iraq's million-man army is shared by neither the Joint Chiefs of Staff nor simple common sense.

H. LAWRENCE GARRETT III
Washington, D.C.

The writer is secretary of the Navy.

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Word games

IS THERE A WORD IN THE SOCIAL vocabulary we employ more promiscuously than "community"? The intelligence community, the business community, the world community, the arts community, the academic community. . . . Some of these are fictions, some outright oxymorons. Still, people like to think of themselves as belonging to a community, because the very word connotes moral norms. Sometimes that word is all there is to cover the shame of the utter normlessness of real-life facts. Even Reaganites purported to be communitarians, although the ideology of many of them was an especially rapacious version of "I'm all right, Jack" individualism. (To be fair, there were important exceptions—George Will, for example.) Not that we're altogether without communities in America. There are religious communions, and not only religious communions, whose bonds are so organic and so stable that they meet the most stringent definitions of community. Even understood in this sense, however, community is not necessarily all it's cracked up to be. It can be coercive and intolerant. It can divide the self from the other quite as much as it brings them together. It is fearsome in its psychological powers. But a dynamic and anomic society that has left so many people and groups behind—or with which so many have declined to make the effort to join—inspires a yearning, a nostalgia for something close, caring, and compelling, even if it's something that has never been.

NO WONDER, THEN, THAT BLACK Americans are among those who cling to the reassurance provided by the word "community." Nonetheless, the black populace of our country is not really a community, any more than the white populace is. The black middle class improvises no worse and no better than the white middle class in the struggle to maintain the minimal remnants of community for themselves and their families. But this is to beg the question where the black poor are concerned. Community is the home of morality, as Robert Nisbet puts it in his parsing of the texts that have made the word a unit-idea of modern social thought. In it reside the elemental sentiments—honor is a prototypical instance, working for the future may be another—that discipline our behavior and guide our minds. But community doesn't exist, except as a slogan, where family has been eroded. The family provides us with the first paradigm of authority. Without authority there is no structure, no obligation, no responsibility. And this increasingly is what obtains among the black poor. The statistics require scant repetition: 65 percent of all black babies are born to unwed mothers, many of them teenagers. Such hapless and helpless mothers can scarcely be a source of authority to their young. In these households there may be many men but no real fathers. So there is no significant authority from either parent. Children growing up deprived of authority and its teachings are that much more handicapped in learning to learn and learning to work. They will be more vulnerable to the lures of crime and drugs and drink; they will be lured, that is, to the dark and perilous shadows of the urban landscape. Already one in four black men aged 20 to 29 is either in jail or on probation. That's why these numbers augur so much a worsening of the social and economic conditions of black America, a relentless increase in the statistics of the underclass. All the prattle about the hidden strengths of the black community—the kind of prattle in which Toni Morrison indulges—can't disguise the fact that more and more black youngsters will simply be unable to perform the demanding intellectual and technological functions of modern life.

NO SOCIAL POLICY, NO SOCIAL expenditure will compensate the black population (or the country) for the disintegration of intrinsic black family structures. Certainly affirmative action won't do the trick. So, for years, we assumed something seemingly more essential: that if black men had jobs they would marry. Which is to say they would reverse the demographic explosion of children with harried mothers and absent (often unknown) fathers. This was the message of the sociologist William Julius Wilson, and we clung to it as to a lifeboat. Now David Ellwood, author of *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*, reporting on his work with two colleagues in the fall 1990 *Research Bulletin* of the Kennedy School, shows that this too was a comforting fiction. The sad truth is that among employed black men aged 20 to 24, the marriage rate fell from 45 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1988. In the 25-34 age group during the same years the proportion fell by more than one-third. Among working men who had dropped out of school it had fallen by more than half. If a lift in black employment won't revive the dying black family, what will? And if nothing will, what then?

I DON'T MEAN TO BE FINICKY about words. But there is a difference between human rights and political rights. It's the difference between what is denied in Iraq and what was denied in Kuwait. That difference is why we needn't be embarrassed to be defending the Kuwaitis—to be defending, that is to say, the not-so-terrific against the absolutely horrific. Kuwait was one of many societies that didn't function democratically. Citizenship was limited, and the privileges of citizenship were limited, too. This makes our defense of Kuwait unworthy, say those who wish to impede it. True, the authorities sometimes confiscated the mimeograph machines of the emerging opposition. But Kuwait's was a hospitable society. The authorities did not come in the night to torture and murder; people didn't disappear, never to be seen again. But that's what happens routinely in Iraq, and now also in Kuwait under Iraqi control. Samir el-Khalil, the pseudonymous Iraqi scholar, calls Iraq "the republic of fear." It is a place where human rights are not simply abused; they just don't exist.

ANTHONY LEWIS WROTE A COLumn last week in which he complained that President Reagan was soft on Saddam Hussein. That's true. George Bush was soft, too, by the way, until the day before yesterday. But then, so too was Lewis himself. He has no shame. The character of the Iraqi regime has been obvious from the start; its lust for blood is embedded in a grisly history and culture about which the columnist has never shown that he knows anything. Tony Lewis is a literate man, but he is not a learned man, at least not in matters foreign on which he opines so regularly and passionately. When in 1981 the Israelis took out the Iraqi nuclear plant, Lewis reproached them for having forfeited "the hope of realistic relations with all its neighbors." Comparing Saddam Hussein to Anwar Sadat, Lewis insisted that had Israel not acted, Iraq could have been deflected from a nuclear course by diplomacy. Putting unidentified "evidence" and "scientific judgments" together with nameless "officials" and "nuclear specialists" to buttress his benign perceptions of the Baghdad state, he argued that Israel had resorted to force because that was just its way of doing things in the world. Fine, let him persist in his malign view of Israel. But he ought to have the decency to admit he was wrong about Iraq, wildly and woefully wrong. And he shouldn't cavil at others who saw in Saddam Hussein a man no more awful than did Anthony Lewis himself.

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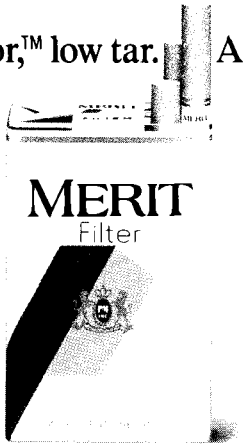

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